

AUTUMN

No. 968

THE
CORNHILL

*Elizabeth Bowen
Robert Graves
Geoffrey Grigson
P. Mansell Jones
Osbert Lancaster
Harold Nicolson
David Paul
'Saki'*

*Martin Turnell
Arthur Waley*

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THE CORNHILL



No. 968

AUTUMN 1946

MAGAZINE

EDITED BY PETER QUENNELL

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JOHN MURRAY, 50 ALBEMARLE STREET, LONDON, W.1

EDITORIAL NOTE

In the first place, a message of reassurance to subscribers who write lamenting that, since April, issues of the CORNHILL have somehow failed to reach them. Till paper-restrictions are relaxed, the CORNHILL cannot hope to come out monthly, and we must be content with a yearly production of three—or, at most, of four—numbers. In the present number we have aimed at variety. Harold Nicolson's account of a visit to Nuremberg accompanies literary criticism by Elizabeth Bowen, Martin Turnell, David Paul and P. Mansell Jones : Robert Graves depicts the Western world in the dawn of the Christian era : Geoffrey Grigson reviews the achievement of a little-known Victorian artist : Arthur Waley breathes life into a traditional Chinese fairy tale. 'Saki', whose story, 'The East Wing', has not hitherto been published, reflects the temperate cynicism of a calmer and happier age ; while Osbert Lancaster's impressions of Athens, collected from his sketchbook, show the white skeleton of an ancient classical city emergent against the gathering storm-clouds of the modern *Dies Irae*.

[Subscriptions for the CORNHILL are now available from any bookseller or from 50 Albemarle Street, London, W.1. A subscription for 4 issues costs 10s. 8d. and for 8 issues 21s. 4d. including postage. A few copies of the last issue, April, which included H. E. Bates's new short novel, are being reserved for any who would like to start a subscription from and including the April issue.]

Visit to Nuremberg

Extracts from the diary of

HAROLD NICOLSON

April - May 1946

Tuesday, April 30.—I drive to Gloucester Place to pick up George Clerk. We then go together down to Northolt aerodrome, arriving there at 9.0. We taxi off at 9.30 and after buzzing a bit upon the tarmac we rise into the air at 9.40.

On we go over Belgium, passing Ghent at 10.55 and Brussels at 11.10. The fields below us change suddenly from the long calm slips of Belgium into the terraces of vineyards; we are over Germany; the Mosel twists and turns below us and to the left through the wide blue haze flashes the silver scimitar of the Rhine. We must be flying fairly high, since when we cross the river it seems but a small stream between high banks; there below me, as a tiny hummock, is the Loreley. The bridges are broken and lie sideways and weary across the stream; there is scarcely any traffic on the river. We catch a distant glimpse of Wiesbaden; we see shell-holes pocking the railway track and in sidings long lines of burnt-out trucks; there is little traffic on the roads and we can see no workers in the field—*Raum ohne Volk*. At 12.20 we fly directly over Darmstadt; in place of the happy Residenzstadt which I remember, with its trees, fountains and bright awnings, I see a disused and crumbling honeycomb. At 1.0 p.m. we land very quietly upon the Furth aerodrome at Nuremberg. We are met by Gavin Cliff Hodges, who is acting as Norman Birkett's marshal and aide-de-camp. After a few formalities and a cup of coffee we enter a military car driven by a bright young man in the Welsh Guards. We enter the city of Nuremberg.

The suburb of Furth through which we first pass is almost undamaged, but when we enter the town of Nuremberg itself there is desolation everywhere. We drive straight to the Court House. It is a large modern building, hastily patched up after comparatively slight bomb damage. Behind it is the prison, surrounded by a high and thick castellated wall, upon the parapet of which American sentries in their white helmets patrol ceaselessly with Tommy-guns under their arms.

We show our passes, enter the building, and ascend a wide wooden staircase with a drab grey carpet and a cheap balustrade. The walls of the staircase are decorated with pictures cut from illustrated sup-

plements and rapidly framed. They intrude with Gartenlaube effect upon our solemn mood.

On reaching the second floor, which is peopled with U.S. sentries who again scrutinise our passes, we enter Norman Birkett's room. We are there provided with further passes and conducted into the Court-room. The immediate impression is that it is much smaller than expected. There is the effect of voices speaking quietly in a silence. We are conducted to seats in the front row under the gallery. There are small red arm-chairs set close together as in a provincial cinema. On the back of each chair is suspended a pair of ear-phones; and to the arm of each chair is affixed a little dial and knob. One fits one's head and hair into the ear-phones and suddenly the sound of German loudly spoken bursts upon one; a turn of the knob upon the dial switches the German into English; another turn and it is Russian one hears, and with another turn comes a calm French voice. At the far end of the Court, behind a plate-glass screen, sit the interpreters, vociferating rapidly into microphones suspended, as with telephone operators, from their necks. I listen generally in German, but from time to time I turn my knob; the time interval between the German as spoken and the translation as it reaches me through the ear-phones is that between a cry and the answering echo. Every person in the Court—the judges, the prosecution, the counsel, the witnesses and the defendants in the dock—keep their ear-phones on the whole time. This admirable and ingenious system, which will curtail the duration of the trial by several months, was invented by the American, Brigadier Gill. He deserves great credit. It is a system which must eventually be adopted at all international conferences. After a few minutes one ceases to notice one's own ear-phones; when one rises in one's place one forgets to take them off.

Having adjusted, practised and rejoiced in this superb invention, I sit back and look around me. Immediately in front of us, and on our own level, are the four tables of the prosecuting counsel. They are dressed in ordinary business suits, except for the Russians who wear khaki uniform with thin gold shoulder-straps. They sit there at the four tables with their head-phones disarranging their hair and with their clerks and assistants grouped around them. From time to time they will write a note upon the papers spread in front of them; occasionally they will cock aside their ear-phones and address a remark to their juniors, who in their turn raise their ear-phones in order to listen and reply. At the British table I recognise David Maxwell Fyfe with young Emlyn Jones beside him; at the American table sits Judge Jackson, punitive and alert.

To our right rises the dais upon which sit the members of the International Military Tribunal. Behind them, reaching almost to the ceiling, are the tall flags of the four nations. The French, MM.

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Falco and de Varbres, are nearest to us ; then come the Americans, Judge Parker and Judge Biddle ; then Lord Lawrence, the President, with Norman Birkett beside him ; and at the end the two Russians, Nikitchenko and Volschkow, who are dressed in uniform. They make the other judges, who are in dark lounge suits, look eminently civilian. Below this long high dais sit the clerks and stenographers, and exactly opposite, raised above the ground level of the Court, is the dock, in which the defendants are aligned in two rows, one above the other. In the narrow passage between the dock and the back wall stand six United States Security Police with white helmets, white belts, white truncheons and white gaiters. These spots of white stand out against the rather neutral background even as a white sheet of note-paper would stand out against the green benches of the House of Commons. Two further snowdrops stand at the front of the dock facing each other and alert to see that no illicit packages are passed from the dock to the defending counsel who sit in front. In the body of the Court there are two separate stands, each fitted with microphones. The first, which is just in front of the tables reserved for the prosecuting counsel, is the stand for the defending or prosecuting counsel when they address the Court. The second, which stands opposite at the far end of the Court, is the stand for witnesses. The colouring of the Court is mahogany brown scarcely relieved by the dark green marble surrounds to the several exits and entrances. The room is lit by slit lights in the ceiling, and there is an alternative system of reflectors for illumination when photographs are taken. At the back is a large white screen which is used when films are projected. The dominant feeling is a feeling of order and silence ; the proceedings are conducted almost in a hush.

My gaze then turns to the dock. The defendants sit in the following order : *Front row.* Göring, Hess, Ribbentrop, Keitel, Kaltenbrunner, Rosenberg, Frank, Frick, Streicher, Funk, Schacht. *Second row.* Dönitz, Raeder, Baldur von Schirach, Sauckel, Jodl, Papen, Seyss-Inquart, Speer, Neurath, Fritzsche.

They look drab, depressing, ill : they have the appearance of men who have sat up in a third-class railway carriage for three successive nights. It seems inconceivable that such dim men could have done such huge and dreadful things. This is the first impression which they convey in the mass. But when one observes more closely one notices differences in their individual demeanour. Göring is the dominating figure. He slouches there in a loose light uniform without badges of rank : it hangs bunchily upon his now diminished frame and from time to time he will gather it in folds as if it were a toga. He leans his pasty face upon a wide yellow hand, and at intervals he will place his huge fist against his chin in the attitude of Rodin's *Penseur*. For so heavy a man, although now shrunken, his movements

are alert, rapid, nervous, impulsive. His expression varies between sullen indifference, amused contempt, and a gay and sporting acceptance of the fact that we have won and he has lost. Beside him all the others appear very little men. On his left hand sits Rudolf Hess, apparently not attending very much, opening a book occasionally which he holds upon his knees, but not reading it with any concentration, just glancing down at it from time to time as if it were something which he happened to be holding in his hand. Ribbentrop is much changed. His face is grey and thin; his soft collar fits badly and flops outwards; he closes his eyes and keeps his face as rigid as a mask; his hands rest motionless upon his knees. Keitel, in field-grey uniform but stripped of all badges of rank, looks trim, tough, disciplined, reserved, distinguished. Rosenberg is no longer the handsome and idiotic young man whom I interviewed many years ago at Claridge's Hotel; he is a dim middle-aged creature with a hanging head. Papen looks haggard and untidy; his exquisitely brushed hair has been disarranged by the ear-phones and stands jaggedly on end. Neurath, who used to be a solid rather heavy man, is crouched and old. Baldur von Schirach, whom I had never seen before, is not what I imagined; I had expected a plump tough; he has a delicate, ascetic, slimy face. Jodl sits upright, like an old family coachman on the box. Fritzsche is less overwhelmed than the others; he sits straight and moves his face and hands. But of those whom I had known in the old Berlin days only Schacht is really unchanged. He still wears the high collar which I remember; he does not converse with his fellow defendants; as he moves his face upwards, his pince-nez catch the ceiling-lights and dance delightedly; he is, as always, entranced by his own brilliance; he seems almost gay.

At this—the first session that I have attended—Dr. Dix, the leader of the Berlin bar, is making a long, rambling, and to my mind ineffective speech in Schacht's defence. '*Eure Lordschaft*,' he says, addressing Geoffrey Lawrence, '*ich gestehe . . .*' From time to time Lawrence, with exquisite courtesy and in the gentlest voice, will beg him to confine himself to the point at issue. Occasionally the proceedings are interrupted while the judges confer together, raising their ear-phones for the purpose, in their box. The Russian and French interpreters scurry back and forth from Lawrence to Nikitchenko or from Falco to Norman Birkett. Then the droning begins again and the proceedings continue.

Schacht is placed in the witness-stand at the end of the Court. He beams with pleasure. Two young American snowdrops take their stand, one on each side of him; every hour or two other snowdrops creep silently in, stand behind their comrades, take furtively from them the white truncheon of duty, slide silently into their place. The whole machinery of the trial works on beautifully oiled wheels.

At 3.15 there is a short recess. The German counsel, some of whom wear coloured gowns, rise from their tables in front of the dock and talk to their clients, watchfully supervised by snowdrops. When the Court resumes, Schacht is asked leading questions by his counsel, Dr. Dix. He answers them in a ready voice; very loud. He is completely master of himself and of his dates and facts. 'Did you support the Nazi Weltanschauung?'—'I reject every philosophy which is not based upon true religion.'—'When did you first realise that Hitler was insane?'—'When he appointed Ribbentrop as his Foreign Minister.' At this Ribbentrop, who as usual had been gazing almost unconscious straight in front of him, indicated wearied dissent. 'What was your true opinion of Adolf Hitler?'—'I thought him a man of *diabolische genialität*.' (I quickly turn my knob at this to catch the English translation—'genius' came the echo as I switched.) 'I regarded him as a man who began with many fine ideas but who in the end became infected by the very poisons with which he sought to inoculate the masses.'

Dix does not seem to me to ask the best sort of questions; but Schacht answers all his questions in the best sort of way.

At 5.0 we adjourn. We drive back to Birkett's little villa in the Beethovenstrasse. He is a wonderful host and Gavin Cliff Hodges is most attentive and efficient. We dine quietly at the villa. We do not talk about the trial. Birkett has an amazing memory and a fine ear for poetry. We talk literature till bed-time. I sleep well after a long and most instructive day.

Wednesday May 1.—I dress early and go out into the fresh May morning with a hint in it of heat to come. I tell the American sentries at the gate that I am going out for a little walk and that they must not shoot me when I return. I then turn to the right and leave the Beethovenstrasse for other alleys in this garden suburb. Many villas have been destroyed, the walls of others are pitted with shell-pox, and here and there a street lamp leans at an exhausted angle. I come to a *rond-point* where there is a large oak with a bench around it. I sit down. An old Bavarian peasant limps up the hill and sits down beside me with a weary sigh. I engage him in conversation and give him a cigarette. I say that I am distressed to see how much of Nuremberg has been destroyed. '*Der Hitler*,' he replies, '*war ein Narr*.' He asks me whether London has been equally destroyed; I say that it has been severely damaged. '*Ich meine*,' he repeats, '*der Hitler war ein Narr*.' This is an illuminating remark. It is no use our talking to these people about the wickedness of the Nazi system; they regard that as English hypocrisy and self-righteousness. But we can convince them of its utter stupidity, and through that entry some idea may be conveyed that it was stupid mainly because it was so wicked.

I give the old man another cigarette and he says '*Grüss Gott!*' which is an old-fashioned Bavarian expression. I then return to the villa, only to find that in my absence the sentry has been relieved by another snowdrop who had not seen me emerge. I show him my passes which admit me into the Court House but not into Norman Birkett's villa. The sentry does not realise from my accent that I belong to the English-speaking race. He makes gestures indicating that I should leave. Fortunately our own military policeman is watching from the window; he opens it and says 'Mate. E's us.' At which the snowdrop stops chewing the cud of suspicion, salutes charmingly, and I go in to breakfast.

We drive down to the Court with Norman Birkett. I gaze at the terrible destruction on the way. Houses tumble, bridges collapse, tram-lines are twisted, and the road here and there is diverted round enormous craters: but the trees remain immune. Vast chestnut trees spread their candelabra across the rubble, and in calcined court-yards the lilac bushes burst into dim flame.

We reach the Court House. The sentries on duty are so perfectly trained that they pretend not to recognise Birkett and scrutinise his pass as carefully as if he were a prominent ex-Nazi. Even when they identify him they do not, such is their omnipotence, salute. 'Pass along' they say with that lovely Yankee smile which always gets my heart. We go to Birkett's room where his clerk has papers for him to sign. While we are waiting Cliff Hodges shows us a photostat of the report on the fifty British and Commonwealth airmen executed for escaping from a Stalagluft. It is a neatly typed document in which the names of the airmen are carefully recorded together with their next of kin. It is a horribly cold document. Against each name are written the words, 'Shot while trying to escape.'

We enter the Court-room. This time we are in the Visitors' Gallery above the Press Gallery, where we were yesterday. This entails climbing a further flight of stairs; these are not carpeted but are of naked granite; it is up these stairs that the defendants pass to the upper rooms where they have their luncheon; the space above and between the banisters is enclosed in heavy wire-netting to prevent them throwing themselves over. The rooms where they lunch are empty of all furniture except for the table and chair on which they feed; their tables are placed at wide distances apart and each one bears the name of its occupant, neatly printed as on the cards which decorate the reception desks of American hotels. From the window, which is encased in steel wire, they can see over the suburbs of Nuremberg to where the woods of Franconia sparkle in the May sunshine.

When we enter the Court-room Schacht is again upon his stand. He sits there, patiently, his pince-nez twinkling with benignity and self-esteem. He was always like that. I recalled how Stresemann,

many many years ago, had said to me : ' Do you know what I said to Schacht this morning ? I said something rude. I said to him, " It is sad, Herr Direktor, to notice how few ideas you have had since Lord D'Abernon left us." ' But there was Schacht, almost twenty years later, as ebullient as ever.

At 11.15 there was an adjournment. We are picked up in Birkett's room by Colonel Andrus, the Governor of the prison. He was in uniform under a blue helmet ; there was a grim but very humane twinkle in his eye. I liked him much. He took us over the prison and showed us the several cells. I promised him that I should not publish any account of what I saw until the trial was concluded. All I can say is that the treatment of the defendants, and the conditions under which they were imprisoned, seemed to me exactly the same as that which I had seen at Maidstone Gaol, Wormwood Scrubbs or any of the many English prisons which I have visited. . . .

On our return to the Court House we lunch with the judges in the room reserved for them. We have frankfurter sausages, and fruit salad from a tin ; all American army rations. I sit between Birkett and the French judge, de Varbres. The latter says that he has learnt much from this experience of English judicial methods. ' Milord Lawrence,' he said, '*est si courtois—si distingué—si poli enfin—je l'admets bien—c'est impressionnant.*' I am, in fact, deeply impressed by the way in which Lawrence and Birkett have conveyed their personality and their traditions to the entire Court ; this mitigates much of the uneasiness, the actual disquiet, which I had felt about the trial before coming to Nuremberg. I am glad that we are represented by two such men. I have a few words with the senior Russian judge, Nikitchenko. He is very polite and most agreeable. He adopts a slightly military posture, making stiff short bows like a Field-Marshal.

After luncheon I go with Cliff Hodges and George Clerk on a short drive through what was once the city of Nuremberg. We pause at the Fleischbrücke and watch the Pegnitz burbling happily below us. We walk on to the Hauptmarkt. The church of Our Lady is totally destroyed, although the façade remains ; the Neptune fountain had been encased in cement and remains, I suppose, intact ; the Dürerhaus is nothing but an empty shell. Slowly and sadly we climb up to the Burg in the hot sunshine ; the heavy walls still remain but all the turrets and roofing have been shattered ; from the high parapet we look down upon that once lovely city ; it has the appearance of the jaw-bone of a camel lying beside a desert track. It was against those dark walls, in that very moat, that my friend Richard Jöks was shot by the Nazis for being a communist. I brood on this incident, hoping that it will give me some sense of retribution ; but when I look down upon the dusty ruins of the city I feel nothing but disgust and sorrow.

We return to the Court House. Schacht, still imperturbable, is

again in the witness-stand. He is polite, urbane, self-assured and almost witty. He describes how, at the welcome given to Hitler at the Anhalterbahnhof on his return from signing the armistice with France, he himself remained in the background. Hitler saw him hiding at the back of the crowd and pushed his way towards him. 'Well, Herr Schacht, what do you say now?'—'I merely bowed my head,' said Schacht, 'and murmured the words "May God keep you under his protection."' This rather effective explanation was, the day after I left Nuremberg, completely negated by a film flung on the screen at the back of the Court by the American prosecutor, Judge Jackson. In this film, which was one of the many Nazi films which we have captured, the scene at the Anhalterbahnhof was vividly portrayed. Schacht could be observed frantically pushing his way through the intervening generals in order to cast his arms around Hitler's neck and smother him with adulation. I am sorry about this. I rather like Schacht and always regarded him as a vain but honest man.

The Court rises at 5.0. We have some tea and cakes in Birkett's room and then drive out to the great stadium which was the scene of the Nazi rallies, attended in the past by many of my more ignorant or less prudent friends. The huge eagle and swastika by which the centre was surmounted have been taken down, showing brick scars under the stone plinth. The Americans have painted in huge blue letters under the tribune the words 'Soldiers Field,' and at each pylon a huge blue 'A,' being the badge of the 3rd United States Army, has replaced the swastikas. It is a fine warm evening and the local Trades Unions are celebrating May Day with athletic sports. There is a desultory soccer match proceeding in the centre, relay races being run round the course, and two vague boxing contests being held in the corners. It is all very *gemütlich*, ill-organised and pacific. I watch the young competitors in their shorts and singlets; they do not appear starved, but I have been warned not to judge by physical impressions. We mingle with the crowd, Norman Birkett being followed by a single military policeman. The people glance at us, realise that we are English, and glance aside; I see no scowls. I feel embarrassed and foolishly ashamed. We then drive round by the vast building, still incomplete, which was to house the Nazi headquarters; we pass huge dumps of guns and burnt-out railway trucks; we take the autobahn and drive out into the spring woods. Birkett finds great solace in these excursions. We return to the Villa in time for dinner. David Maxwell Fyfe, Barrington and Judge Biddle come to dine. Biddle is a most agreeable and cultivated man.

Thursday, May 2.—In a little room across the passage from Norman Birkett's room at the Court House the documents in the case are preserved in steel files. A special safe contains the chamber of horrors.

A friendly and efficient young American officer shows us his exhibits. He shows us the human head which the Nazi experimentalists had treated in the manner in which the Borneo head-hunters treated their trophies. It had been reduced to the size of an orange and mounted on a little wooden stand. When tapped, it emitted a dumb sound as if composed of condensed cardboard. Although recognisably human, an appearance of unreality was given to it by a mop of reddish hair which had been affixed at the top and which gave it the appearance of an amateurish doll. We were also shown specimens of soap made from human fats and looking like dried cream cheese. Then there was the lampshade panel which Frau Koch of Buchenwald is said to have chosen for her boudoir. At first sight it seemed no more than an ordinary bit of parchment on which had been painted a rather crude representation of a ballet dancer; on looking closer, however, one sees the marks of nipples on each side of the dancer and realises that the design was a tattoo upon some human chest. But the worst exhibit of all are some photographs from a film captured from an S.S. officer. The film depicts the mass murder of Jewish women. A wide trench, as wide as a small valley, had been dug by bull-dozers. The women were taken out in batches of fifteen and shot so that their bodies, whether dead or not, fell back into the trench behind them. One could see the fifteen women standing at the edge of the trench and the corpses or wounded bodies of their predecessors completely filling the upper half of the trench behind them; they looked like a full catch of mackerel spilled out from some returning trawler. The horrible thing was that these women were all completely naked. There was another photograph of the women being herded by a gargantuan S.S. guard towards the place where they were to be shot. At first sight one might have taken this photograph to be one from *Picture Post* depicting girls running down the beach to bathe on a cold day, but as one looked one could see that they were crouching forward and clinging to each other in panic terror; their breasts hung pitifully, they tottered on their naked limbs. There was another photograph of a large pile of recently severed heads; the head on the top of the pile wore a smile of utter contempt.

We drove with Cliff Hodges to the Verdesheimer Forst and the village of Pottenstein. It lies in a deep valley and as we paused to look down upon it from an upper meadow scattered with cowslips and wild orchids, there rose from the village the sounds of running water, of hens clucking, and the bark of dogs. In the surrounding woods the cuckoos were calling each to each. George Clerk thereafter fished for trout while I sat among the cowslips and read. We returned by way of Göring's shooting lodge at Neuhaus and on approaching Nuremberg we passed two prison camps where S.S. men and women are kept behind barbed wire. There they were sun-

bathing ; displaying the pink and innocent torsos of brutes. The women in their camp lolled on hard chairs ; they were watched by a prim wardress from the United States who sat in the shade of a hut knitting slowly with a novel on her knee.

In the evening Lord and Lady Lawrence come to dinner ; also the American Judge Parker. . . .

Friday May 3.—Leave Nuremberg at 10.15 and reach Northolt (British summer time) at 12.25. This expedition has convinced me once again that one should never reach conclusions about anything until one has seen it at first hand. I went out to Nuremberg in an uneasy and critical mood, feeling that it was wrong absolutely for a conqueror to sit in judgement on his captives. It may be that I was unconsciously prejudiced by having seen the Soviet film on the Kharkov trials, which had overwhelmed me with pity and disgust. It was different at Nuremberg. I was conscious that behind it all gibbered an unseen ghost : the sly, insatiable, ferocious and demonic ghost of Hitler. But I was conscious of another presence also. I had felt upon my cheek the wind of the wings of justice.

Some Notes on Francis Danby, A.R.A.

BY GEOFFREY GRIGSON

I

To educate oneself in English art, and much else, the salerooms are the place ; the place to meditate on the dealers in line, the quick hundred-guinea nods of Bond Street, the well-spoken auctioneer without emotions, the procession of pictures, small pictures which can be held up one in each hand, the sixties-by-eighties which need two attendants in green baize aprons before they are square on the stool for the dealers to look at with financial contempt—unless, as on the occasion I am thinking of, they happen to be by Turner or by Constable.

In this sale there were Eggs, Friths, Ettys, cows by that everlasting Victorian, Thomas Sidney Cooper, who was once, hard as it is to believe, taught by Fuseli. There were two or three pieces by Millais (2,000 guineas for one of them), the Constable (some 6,000 guineas), four Turners, three of them factory Turners, all of them a thousand to two thousand. The worst Egg, a history piece, went for more than two hundred, the best, one of his pieces of Pre-Raphaelite modernism, for twenty. And in among this procession of nineteenth-century art, the collection of a Liverpool merchant of the nineteenth century's amplitude and wealth, in among these lots of dry and dark, of more and of less marketable merchandise, was a picture by Francis Danby. A big solemn seascape, darkened, in need of cleaning, varnishing, restretching ; and sadly in need of a reputation. Four bids. Fourteen guineas. Constable, who loathed Danby and was not a charitable man where his dislikings were concerned, might have been pleased. The Victorian R.A.s, whose rubbish had been in the hundred-guinea class, might also have been pleased, for their malice, as much as any vice of Danby's, was the cause, and remains the cause, of Danby's now complete obscurity.

It was in front of such a Danby as this that another artist who was not an R.A., and had no use for the Academy, Ford Madox Brown, stood reverentially for half an hour at the exhibition.

'His early error had separated him from his brother artists ; and he remained apart from them until his death . . .' 'There was evidently some obliquity of moral sense in Danby's mind in regard to this affair . . .' 'Danby defended the fault to the last rather than regretted it . . .'—to the last, to his death, in 1861, five years

after exhibiting this fourteen-guinea painting, so much the superior to that particular six thousand six hundred-guinea Constable, to those particular thousand-guinea and two thousand-guinea Turners.

2

I cannot claim to have opened up the mystery and the darkness of Danby's life, or to present, finally, an estimate of his work. This is only an interim report—about an artist who is undeniably interesting, various, and persistent in his work, which illustrates a good many of the adventures and turns of English romanticism. Danby was an Irishman from Co. Wexford. When he was twenty he came over to visit London, which must then have seemed the capital of European modernism. With him were two other artists, George Petrie, who afterwards became celebrated as an Irish archaeologist, and the landscape painter, James O'Connor, who is not infrequently represented in English provincial galleries. The year was 1813. Turner was thirty-eight, eighteen years older than Danby. He had just painted 'A Frosty Morning.' Other artists have dated their lives from their first Turner; and Danby kept this picture in his mind. 'Turner is a good example,' he wrote to Petrie some forty years later, 'of painting in age. He was well advanced in years' (which was not quite true) 'when you and I, with our dearly remembered friend, poor James O'Connor, first visited London, when we saw his beautiful and wonderful picture of the "Frosty Morning."' The three of them went to Wales, much as English artists under the early flush of Cézanne went to Provence. Then, his money gone, Danby started back to Ireland, walking from London to Bristol. He changed his mind, started to draw and teach in Bristol for a livelihood, married a Somerset girl, 'imprudently' is the adverb used, and unluckily, and began sending his pictures up to the two major exhibitions.

At this time he painted a good many small detailed landscapes on mahogany panels, rather prosy but firm in construction, and full of a clear light—landscapes of the red rock scenery around Bristol, with the Avon twining through. They are individual and easily distinguished. Very soon he began to explore more fashionable modes of expression. He visited Norway in search of violent landscape, and swung between the two sentimentalities of mild and angry nature. Three pictures made him prominent. The Byronic, or Darwinian, 'Upas Tree' in 1820, 'Disappointed Love' in 1821, and in 1822 'The Raft: Sunset at Sea after a Storm,' which may, one feels, have stemmed out of Géricault's 'Raft of the Medusa,' exhibited in London two years before. Sir Thomas Lawrence, then President of the Academy, liked it, had it well hung, and bought it from Danby for more than a hundred guineas. Danby had moved to London, within two years he was an A.R.A., and he found himself becoming a

celebrity. Sir John Soane patronised him from his cave in Lincoln's Inn Fields, Beckford from his retreat at Bath.

As the Academy's man, Danby began to compete in wild and high 'history' with the non-Academic John Martin. In 1825 came a 'Delivery of Israel out of Egypt.' In 1826—the competition at its sharpest—Danby was at work on 'The Opening of the Sixth Seal.' But in that same year, Martin exhibited his sensational 'Deluge,' which was held, at any rate, by Danby's friends, to have been a plagiarism of Danby's idea for his own apocalypse. Martin got in first, showing his picture at the rival house of the British Institution. Beddoes the poet (no doubt a Bristol friend of Danby's) wrote to B. W. Procter in March: 'Have you seen Martin's Deluge; do you like it? And do you know that it is a rascally plagiarism upon Danby? D. was to have painted a picture for the King: subject, the opening of the Sixth Seal in the Revelation: price eight hundred guineas: he had collected his ideas and scene, and very imprudently mentioned them publicly to his friends & foes—it appears; like Campbell and Lord B.: and lo! his own ideas stare at him out of Martin's canvas in the Institution.' Still, Danby finished his picture. It appeared at the Academy two years later. It was sold, not to the King, but to Beckford, who knew as well as Lawrence the difference between the powers of Martin and Danby, and as well as Wilkie, that Martin could not paint a big toe, as Wilkie said, from the life. Darkened, but still visible, 'The Sixth Seal' now represents Danby—not very well—in the National Gallery at Dublin, the moon veiled in blood, sinking for the last time:

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.

And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind:

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; And every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

'Nothing,' it was afterwards written, when the picture was exhibited years later in Bristol, to an audience who dared not even whisper in front of it, 'nothing in this painting is more calculated to strike the observer than the extraordinary and powerful combination of opposite lights:—the red scorching glare of volcanic eruption, that fills the background,—the vivid glare of the lightning,—the leaden twilight of the foreground, and the calm pure light of heaven, are evidences of a genius, bold, daring, and, in this instance, unparalleled.' He had two more apocalyptic canvases in the next Academy, in 1829.

But to go back to the year when Martin forestalled him. In 1826 he had exhibited 'Christ Walking on the Sea.' George Cumberland had written to his father, Blake's old friend, in Bristol,

'Danby certainly stands first in the historical : his picture of Christ, walking on the sea, as described in the Bible, at night, is quite equal to Rembrandt. As yet it is not sold, but I understand it will be for five hundred guineas.' Somewhere, and somehow, about this time Danby and Constable fell out. There is a hint of ill-feeling in one of Constable's letters. But the enmity is plain in the English version of a poem in Latin by one of Danby's friends, the Bristol connoisseur, John Eagles. The poem praises the Danby themes from fairyland, Greek myth, and the Bible. Paint, it says, fairy and satyr, and nymph and faun

Not vulgar bumkins coarse, ill-bred,
All sweating for their daily bread

Paint

. . . themes sublime—the fiery rain,
Departing Lot, the blazing plain ;
Heaven's vengeance upon Egypt dealt ;
Its blood,—its darkness to be felt ;
—The sinners creeping into cleft
And hole of rock,—the land bereft,—
The awful pause, till wrath awake,
And God arise the world to shake.

These, these are themes, that may proclaim,
So DANBY finds, an artist's fame.
Learn this, ye painters of dead stumps,
Old barges, and canals, and pumps,
Paint something fit to see, no view
Near Brentford, Islington, or Kew—
Paint any thing,—but what you do.

Just the year before, with old barge, dead stumps, canal and pump Constable had exhibited his 'Dedham Lock.'

Leslie bowdlerised his Constable, whose character had its sharp, malicious facet, a certain cunning of the peasant from Suffolk. Constable preferred, as he once said, the still, small voice to the vogue for vast revelations. But he was a friend of John Martin's, and Martin was an enemy of Danby. Constable too was an A.R.A. at this time, but one who was not in love with the Academy. Once, some years on, after he had answered an attack on Martin, delivered from the Academy side, Martin was assured by Constable that the Academy could do him no good. His reply to the attack had been 'that John Martin looked at the Royal Academy from the Plains of Nineveh, from the Destruction of Babylon, etc.' And then Constable added, 'I am content to look at the Academy from a gate, and the highest spot I ever aspired to was a windmill.' Dandy was volatile, an Irishman, and fashionable, Constable quiet, English, and neglected ; but

whatever caused the ill-feeling, whether it was Martin, or whatever it was, it sharpened acutely in 1829, with the Academy elections. Danby was defeated by one vote, and that vote elected Constable. And one may wonder whether Constable, as well as the election, or defeat, had any share in the great mystery, which followed almost at once, in Danby's life. Constable, as he showed with John Linnell, who had once been his friend, was not the man to let go of his enmities.

3

It was in 1829, late in the year, that the great rumpus occurred, hidden deep and dark behind the biographical velvet of Victorian decency and evasion. Let us look at some of the hints. Richard and Samuel Redgrave, in their *Century of Painters* (1866):

Why was Danby never R.A. ? . . . Suffice it to say, most emphatically that it was not for want of a sense of the great merit of the painter : not that his art was unappreciated by his brother members ; hardly even that he made a false step involving the council of that day in many annoyances, and bringing disgrace on art ; since this might have been overlooked as time dimmed its recollection, had not Danby defended the fault to the last rather than regretted it. One who wrote during Danby's lifetime, and when the cause of his being overlooked in the Academy elections must have been well known, after abusing the Academy in vulgar language for its neglect of the painter, passes over his offence, merely saying, 'An unhappy marriage and its concomitants shivered his household gods' ; fine words and ambiguous, and so let them remain. There was evidently some obliquity of moral sense in Danby's mind in regard to this affair . . .

Richard Redgrave : A Memoir, by F. M. Redgrave (1891) :

Redgrave records in his journal that in 1853 he wrote to Danby, asking if he would care to be proposed, as A.R.A.s were now eligible, for the Academicians' Club. Danby replied with a heavy NO. He would not care to be proposed, not unless the R.A.s invited him ; and he had other things in his letter to say on the Academy. And Redgrave adds 'Poor Danby's strictures would seem to imply a strange forgetfulness of the real cause of his position, which was due to a scandal that the Academicians could not condone.'

Richard Garnett, in the *Dictionary of National Biography* :

Danby struck on the rock of domestic difficulties . . . chiefly culpable, and highly culpable . . . imputations cast upon him were never made publicly known . . . moral perversity, not to say obliquity . . . he suddenly left London, declaring he would never live there again, and that the Academy, instead of aiding him, had, somehow or other, used him badly. Some insurmountable domestic difficulty overtook him also, and for eleven or twelve years he lived on the Lake of Geneva, a Bohemian with boat-building fancies.

The Art Journal, in his obituary (1861) :

We are acquainted with the alleged ground of his rejection, but there are many extenuating circumstances which . . . ought to have proved sufficient vindication to warrant his admission among the privileged forty. The Academy will never get rid of the charge of having, upon evidence not altogether tenable, repudiated one of the greatest painters of the age and country.

Strickland's *Dictionary of Irish Artists* :

A hasty and imprudent marriage which was destined to have unfortunate effects upon his future career.

What was the answer ? And why did Danby go into exile ? And why was his name dropped from the canon of English artists ? I wanted to find out, if only to show how art and morality were unctuously, damagingly confused, if only to repay Richard Redgrave for his priggish pronouncements, if only to repay him for another entry, or two other entries in his journal, his insolence to Courbet, upon whose 'L'Atelier' he 'could hardly trust' himself to say what he thought 'of its coarseness of conception, of execution and design . . . the whole is wrought with the execution of a house-painter who has just taken up art' ; his self-satisfaction : 'I have indeed to thank God for many blessings . . . I have been elected a Royal Academician and my pictures have sold well.'

Evidently the truth was still known to Richard Garnett,—or the Academy's version of the truth. I wrote to the Academy ; but if there is anything in the Academy's records, there it stays, not to be divulged. So back again to the *D.N.B.*, and to the lives of all who might have known Danby. One of Danby's sons, Thomas Danby, was an artist, and there in the entry for him, was a clue : 'He lived much with Paul Falconer Poole.' And Poole ? He was a Bristol artist : he 'married Hannah, widow of Francis Danby, A.R.A.' He, too, had come up to London ; and very oddly, he too had disappeared from London in 1829 or 1830 ; not going back to Bristol, as one might expect, not going abroad, but apparently to Southampton, and for seven years his name is missing from the catalogues of the Academy. So obviously Danby, and Poole, and exile, and the rock of domestic difficulties, were all mixed up.

Minor clues attached themselves. Poole and Danby 'were at one time a good deal together' (the brothers Redgrave). George Cumberland, in a letter to his son about Poole in London : 'He is well known to Mr. Danby, I believe, and this will be serviceable.' William Bell Scott on Poole : 'He was a man with a strain of the savage in his blood, and a good hater.' Poole's obituary in the *Athenaeum* : 'a career not entirely unclouded, which began at Bristol

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L. FRANCIS DANBY. THE ENCHANTED ISLAND : CALYPSO GRIEVING FOR HER LOVER. OIL. EXHIBITED 1825.

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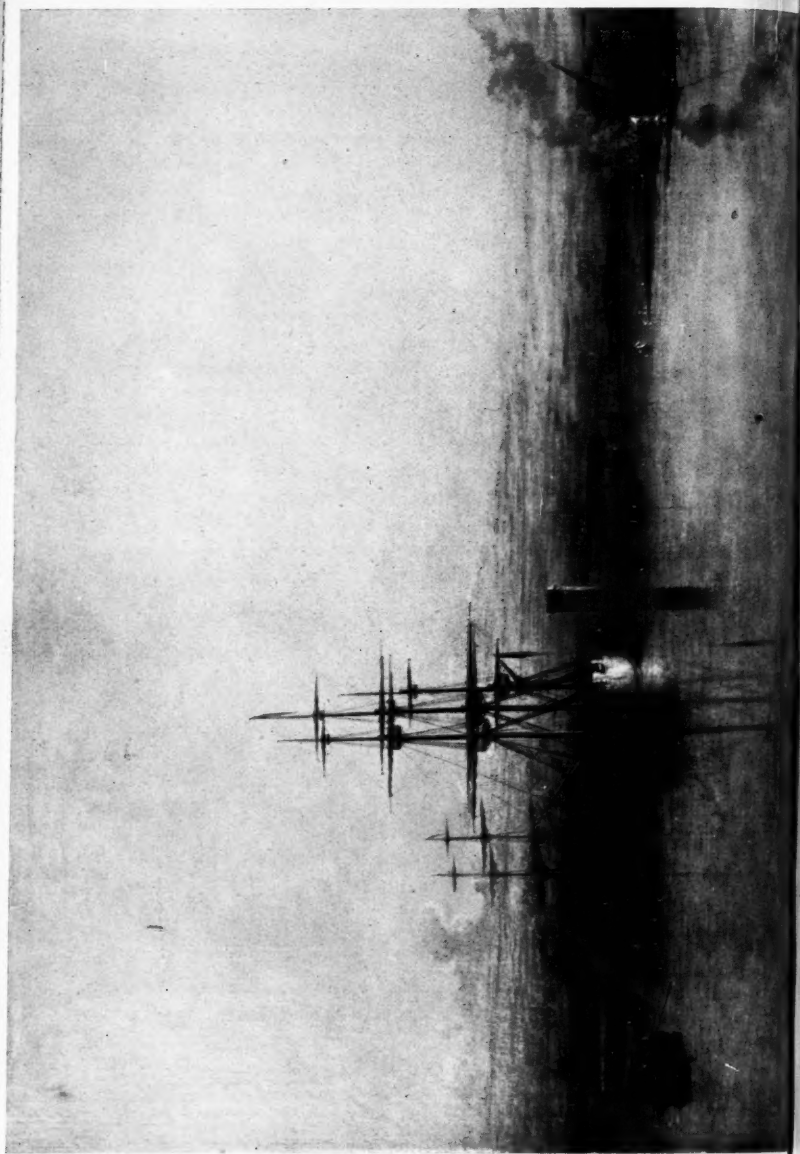
FRANCIS DANBY. WATERCOLOUR.

Collection A. P. Opp

A. P. Opp

FRANCIS DANBY. LIENSFJORD LAKE IN NORWAY: A SUDDEN STORM CALLED A
DANGER.' OIL. EXHIBITED 1841.

Victoria and Albert Museum, Crown Copyright reserved.



IV. FRANCIS DANBY. DEAD CALM: SUNSET AT THE BIGHT OF EXMOUTH.
EXHIBITED 1855.

Collection Geoffrey G

... his quondam friend Danby.' But, so far, the clues only add up to suggestion. Poole was only a boy of nineteen or twenty when the dark event occurred and the two exiles began. Danby was thirty-six or thirty-seven, and his wife must have been a good many years older than Poole, and was already the mother of several children. Danby lived alone, or rather with his children, at Geneva; and one at least infers that Poole lived with Mrs. Danby and perhaps some of the children, marrying her at last as an old woman, after Danby's death. It is not clear whether the 'false step bringing disgrace on art,' the 'scandal that the Academicians could not condone' and the 'rock of domestic difficulties,' were one and the same. Everything—about that there is no doubt—everything was heaped upon Danby. Poole, as a boy, was allowed to grow out of his fault, if there was a fault. He was made an A.R.A. in 1846, some years after Danby returned from exile; and Danby lived just long enough to see, and no doubt without any pleasure, his quondam friend given the thing he had always been denied—full membership of the Academy.

4

It is not easy to realise now, when for so long no generative, considerable painter has been, or needed to be, an R.A., what membership meant in early days, in standing and ability to earn. In Danby's life, at the time of Danby's election as an Associate, the Academy had a remarkable and an open-minded president in Sir Thomas Lawrence, a painter generous, and wide in his generosity, towards the young. He had befriended Danby—and Constable—he had been enthusiastic about Géricault here in London as a young man of thirty. He had had Géricault invited to the Royal Academy dinner—at which one may pause and imagine to oneself Sir Alfred Munnings or his predecessors proposing such an invitation for a Picasso, a Klee, a Matisse, or a George Grosz.

To become an Academician meant lobbying and intrigue and a degree of crawling. Against his will Constable, who was so sharp about crawling in others, so caustic about those 'high-minded' R.A.s, who preferred 'the *shaggy posteriors* of a *Satyr* to the moral feeling of *Landscape*,' was compelled to do a little dignified crawling for himself, as one can see from his canvassing letter to Thomas Phillips, R.A.

I am now past the age of fifty, Mrs. Constable has most delicate health, and has seven infant children who have to look to me only for everything in this world.

I don't feel uncomfortable [which means, I do] while I am writing this sad letter to you, because I have long known you to be a man whose whole conduct is governed by the highest principles of probity and honour. And my object in writing to you at all is that I may be

placed in your mind—fairly—in the list of my worthy brother candidates.

When Richard Redgrave, years later, was elected to full membership, he lurked in Trafalgar Square (the Academy was then in the National Gallery building), heard the news from one of his R.A. friends who slipped out in the dark, took a cab and rushed off with the news to his wife : he could not hear the smooth motion of the cab, he got out, he paid it off, and ran the rest of the way, no doubt clutching his top-hat.

So, one may understand what Danby missed by the election of 1829, by the subsequent row and the mystery and the exile ; and his hopes of a reconciliation cannot have been bettered by the death of Sir Thomas Lawrence. But, in spite of the Academy, he did manage to re-establish himself. For a time, in 1830, he was in Paris. Then came Geneva, yachting on the Lake—he was yachtsman, boat-builder, and inventor as well as artist—and years of steady work, which included travel once more to Norway, and to Constantinople. There are paintings by him in Geneva, in private collections and in the Musée Rath. He came back in 1841, lived near London for a time, and then acquired a house a few yards from the sea at Exmouth, in a land and seascape of pink light reflected from the anchovy rocks, and of wide and shimmering effects. He exhibited, he built boats—one of his launching trenches is still a bunker on the Exmouth golf-course—he nursed his bitterness, and he became famous as one of the rebel artists outside the Academy. His painting had improved and solemnified. He still painted his fancy pieces, his wood nymphs hymning the sunrise, his Caius Mariuses among the ruins of Carthage, his enchanted castles, and Mary Magdalenes in the desert. He achieved a curious double reputation—a popular one with the merchant buyers of the North, and a cult reputation with the Pre-Raphaelites. He had dropped violence, for shimmer and reflections upon water, and sunrise and sunset, calm, melancholy poeticising based on a truthful observation and strengthened by formal arrangement. The fourteen-guinea picture—'Dead Calm, Sunset at the Bight of Exmouth'—has this careful arrangement, a train with a smoke trail moving out to the left, smoke curling out to the right, and in between an intricacy of horizontals and verticals, masts and spars, the square tower of a church, doubled and made more intricate by their reflections in the water. And this formality enforces the wide, melancholy, meditative impact of the picture.

The painting which many men regarded as his masterpiece I have never seen. It was the 'Evening Gun, A Calm on the Shore of England,' exhibited at the Academy in 1848, and at the Universal Exhibition in Paris in 1855, and then two years later at Manchester, in that section of the exhibition of the Art Treasures of the United

Kingdom selected by the semi-Pre-Raphaelite, Augustus Egg. It was a man-of-war firing an evening salute, under a sunset sky over a clear smooth sea. The most lyrical description of it is by Théophile Gautier :

un chef-d'œuvre, tout simplement... Le soleil se couche dans un amas de nuages gris entassés par bancs au bord de l'horizon, et dont les flocons rougissent comme des braises aux reflets de l'astre prêt à disparaître derrière la barre inflexible de la mer ; par-dessus ces bandes de vapeurs, *And all that gorgeous company of clouds*, — un vers de lord Thurlow, que Byron se proposait d'emprunter un jour, — le ciel, dégagé et pur, passe par les transitions de l'aventurine, du citron pâle, de la turquoise au bleu froid et aux teintes violâtres de la nuit. La mer s'endort calme, unie, huileuse, illuminé de quelques rayons frisans. Entre le ciel et l'eau, un navire découpe sa silhouette sombre et ses agrès ténus comme des fils d'araignée. Sur le flanc du navire, un tourbillon de fumée opaque, bleuâtre et lourde, traversé d'un éclair rouge, signale le coup de canon du soir. Le pavillon est amené.

On ne saurait imaginer l'effet poétique de cette scène : il y a dans cette toile une tranquillité, un silence, une solitude qui impressionnent vivement l'âme. Jamais la grandeur solennelle de l'Océan n'a été mieux rendue. (*Les Beaux-Arts En Europe*, 1855.)

Nathaniel Hawthorne saw the 'Evening Gun' at Manchester, and bowed down before it. Ford Madox Brown, antithetical as his practice may have been to Danby's, yet recognised Danby's solemnity and truth to nature. He many times referred to Danby ; and in 1887, when Danby had been dead for twenty-six years and the Jubilee Exhibition was organised at Manchester, he wrote bitterly in the *Magazine of Art* on 'The Progress of English Art as not shown at Manchester.' Why was there no Martin ? Why was there no Danby ?

The works of Danby at that time, as I remember them forty years ago, enjoyed an immense reputation, and were credited with all sorts of qualities, while many people admired them in preference to Turner's pictures. I remember one in particular called 'The Evening Gun,' an English man-of-war in the tropics firing the salute to parting day—a most solemn and beautiful work. There was also about the same time a picture of his at the British Institution called 'The Gates of the Seraglio,' which represented the steps to the Seraglio at Constantinople as it appeared on the banks of the Bosphorus. The setting sun was ablaze in the windows, and behind the minarets was a round, full moon, rising as in defiance of the declining day, one of the most beautiful effects in all nature.

Rossetti, and his friend, the artist and writer and acute interpreter, James Smetham, admired Danby, who must, Smetham wrote

have watched on lonely hills, in silent vales, the last spark of great Day die out and the first rise ten thousand times before he could find the secret of that pathetic dream of nature which makes his work unique To the believer in Danby all the persuasion and settlement is *there*—the data of the poetic—that dark pines cutting crimson horizons are poetic ; that misty tarns with the purple evening departing from them are poetic ; or that Danby's pines and Danby's tarns are so, if a hundred instances in which pines and tarns are not so in other men's pictures, or were not so in given circumstances in nature, were cited Rossetti would grant me at once the whole question, because at a glance he *sees* the whole. Here is a man who does not, or will not. No matter, let us turn the conversation. But no ; he has new questions about the nature and value of 'authority.' What if Rossetti agrees with you about Danby ? Rossetti is not infallible, and Frith thinks Danby's pictures 'miserable.' 'Rossetti ? where are his pictures to be seen ?' Now Frith painted for the Queen and Royal Family, and is R.A.'

It is true, Danby's pictures have not always lasted. To Madox Brown's complaint and his mention of the 'Evening Gun' and the 'Gates of the Seraglio,'—properly called the 'Gate of the Harem'—the editor of the *Magazine of Art* added a defensive note 'These works are said to be in a ruined condition.' The brothers Redgrave remark that he seems 'to have used some vehicle such as gold-size, that has darkened with age, and in some cases caused the darks to crack.' The very genuine drama of his 'Upas Tree,' moonlight and stars and rocks, waterfall, poison tree, poison seeker, and bones, is now in a disappointing state. Darkening, and the Frith taste of the later nineteenth century were added to the fact that Danby had been a 'bad' man ; and all have helped to drive him into oblivion. Disregarded pictures here and there, a mention in books of reference, a Danby Terrace in Exmouth, a grave in the churchyard of the ruined Devonshire church of St. John-in-the-Wilderness (very appropriate)—these are the present memorials of a painter who might have established himself as one of the most renowned men of the century.

5

There is a bust of Danby, a marble bust in the National Gallery at Dublin, which shows a strong-chinned, vigorous, long face ; clean shaven, with a suggestion of humour—humour and wilfulness combined. A good face. But I have not found any intimate description of Danby, or, in the difficulties of war-time, anything of his correspondence save for a few published scraps to his friend Petrie. In one letter he wrote 'though the mind may be a diamond it will require a fresh setting if the body be as lead, and its very hardness and durability will help to destroy the setting.' If Danby's mind was not

sheer diamond, if he allowed himself much airy-fairiness, to be blown about much by fashion, to play his own tune and the public's tune, yet he was an artist who cut through his own extravagance, and developed and matured to a grave finality. English art is strewn with geniuses up to twenty-five—too many of them, repetitive and mannered in their prime and through their days of honour, for us to neglect so able an executant as Danby. Moreover, towards artists we adopt a hard priggishness which we do not extend to writers. We forgive Shelley any amount of such airy-fairiness as Danby (who was born the year after Shelley) allowed himself in paint, we forgive Dickens for a Little Nell, and for all kinds of too-muchness. Exactly because of such elements in painters, we refuse to see and admit their virtue. Bewitched by France, we can only see Constable, we can only snigger at the sentiments of a Mulready, a Wilkie, a Danby. We do not search for, or detect, the genuineness which is scattered through their work. We do not even admit to ourselves that, for example, Delacroix (see his comments on the 1855 exhibition in Paris) could find much to be admired in the English school, and not the earlier school of Reynolds; and making no such admission, we do not ask why Delacroix admired, and if there was any basis for admiring.

Our present attitude is uncritical, unhistorical, uninquisitive, as little dependent upon ourselves, and as dependent upon authority, as the attitude and acts of a row of Bond Street dealers nodding away for what they know to be safe and saleable. Exploration would bring pleasure and all the rewards of pleasure, and a better understanding of the good and the ridiculous, the genuine and the meretricious the solid and the fashionable, when we contemplate the rising and setting planets and the Milky Way of modernism. I have always held that the canon of English painting needs some stiff and sensitive revision; and Francis Danby is one man with whom such a revision might begin.

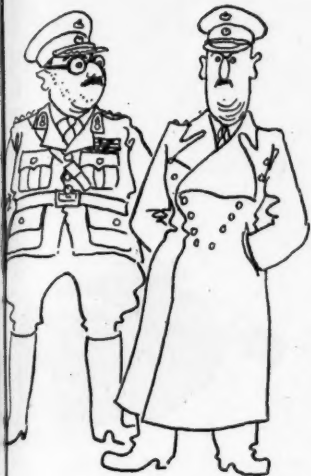
(In London the best paintings by Danby are in the Victoria and Albert Museum: 'Disappointed Love,' 1821, 'Calypso grieving for her lost Lover,' 1825, 'Liensford Lake,' 1841, and what is left of 'The Upas Tree,' 1820. 'The Opening of the Sixth Seal,' 1828, is in the National Gallery at Dublin, but, like the bust, it is not exhibited. One can see a small oil painting, 'The Last Gleam of Sunset,' a portrait of Danby as an old man, sad, bearded and long-haired, by H. T. Munns, a few wild landscapes by O'Connor, and many watercolours by Petrie. The Bristol Art Gallery owns several Danby's, but none of much interest except the two early panel pictures, 'Clifton Rocks from Rownham Field,' and 'Boy Fishing, Stapledon Glen.' The Art Gallery at Wolverhampton owns 'Athens by Moonlight'; and the Musée Rath at Geneva has three oil paintings, 'The Baptism of Jesus,' 'Lake at Sunset,' 'The Baptism of Clorinda.'

'The Fisherman's Home,' 1846, is in the Tate Gallery, but was not on exhibition before the war. 'The Gate of the Harem,' 1845, is in the Royal Collection.)

From an Athenian Sketch Book

BY OSBERT LANCASTER





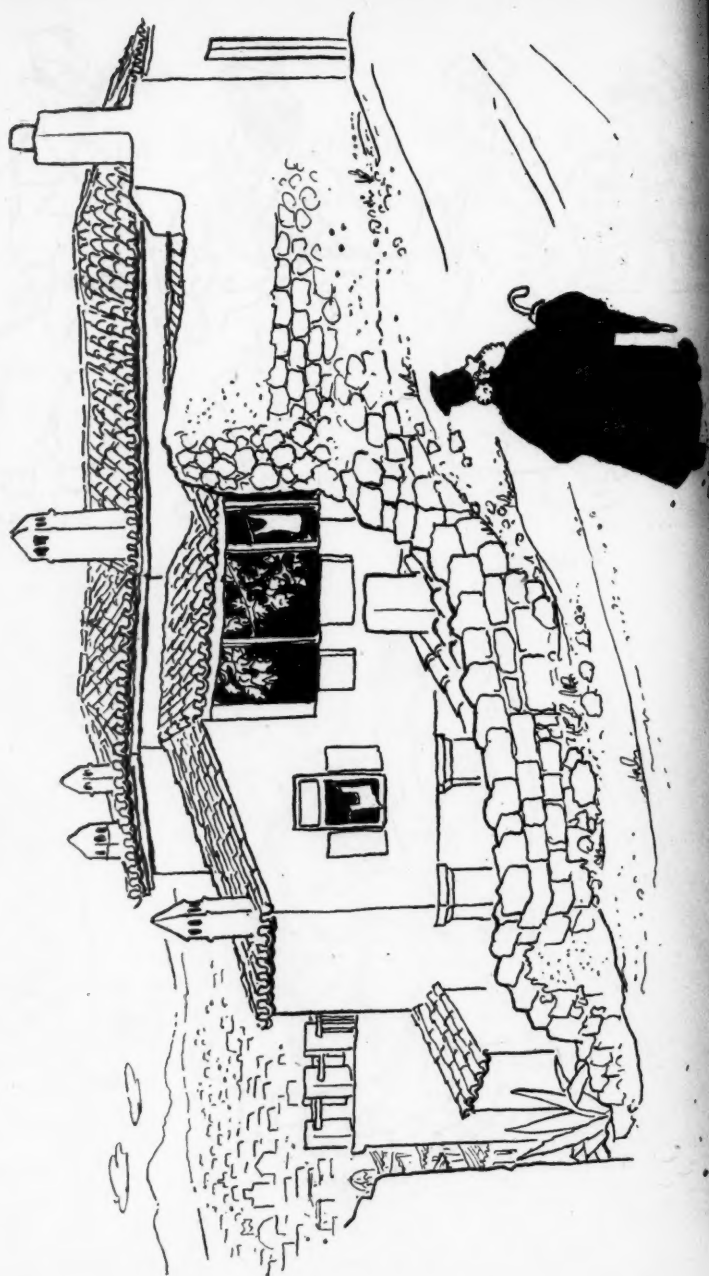
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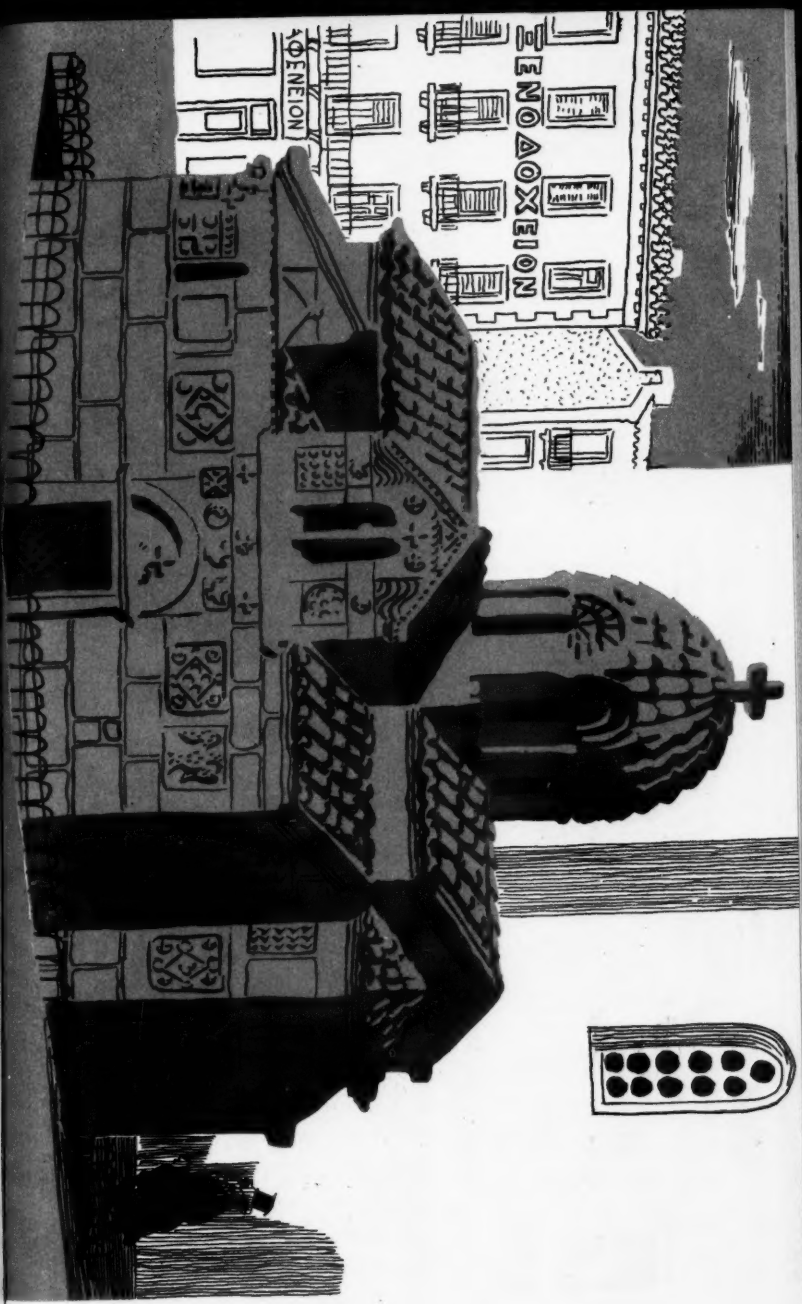


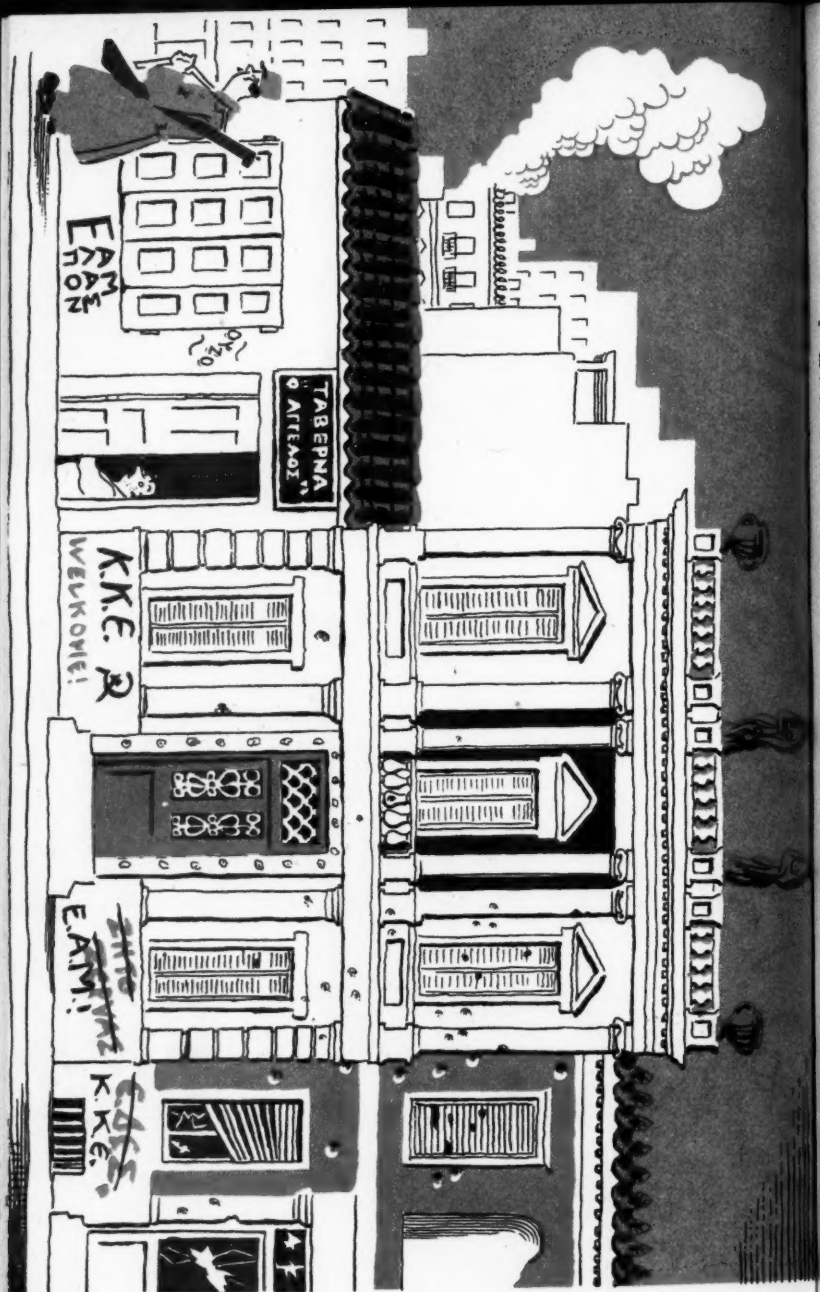
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Dec. '44







It was a Stable World

BY ROBERT GRAVES

The world was stable—a compact world of manageable size, centrally governed—a Mediterranean world with Imperial Rome as the hub, the smoke of sacrifice reeking from a thousand altars and the heavenly bodies circling in foreseeable fashion overhead. True, there was another world that began at the River Euphrates, the Eastern world into which Alexander the Great had freakishly broken three centuries before. But the Romans had left it alone since losing 30,000 men at Carrhae in an attempt to advance their frontiers at Parthian expense. Oriental luxury goods—jade, silk, gold, spices, vermilion, jewels—had formerly come overland by way of the Caspian Sea and now that this route had been cut by the Huns, a few daring Greek sea-captains were sailing from Red Sea ports, catching the trade winds and loading up at Ceylon. But commercial relations were chancy.

Northward, dense forests swarming with uncivilised, red-haired, beer-swilling Germans; and foggy Britain with its chariot fighters who seemed to have stepped from the pages of Homer; and the bleak steppes of Russia peopled by mare-milking nomad Scythians. Westward, the Ocean, supposedly extending to the point where it spilt over into nothingness. Nobody had thought it worth while to test the truth of the Greek legend that far out lay a chain of islands where coco-nuts grew on palms and life was indolent and merry. Southward, marvellous Africa, of which only the nearest regions had been explored; from beyond came rumours of burning deserts, pigmies, camel-leopards and marshes full of cranes. Though the Greek scientist Eratosthenes had calculated the distance of the sun from the earth, and the earth's circumference at the Equator, with only a small error, his theory of a global world was received with polite scorn by men of common sense: how could there be a Southern Hemisphere? An Egyptian admiral had once been sent out from Suez as a punishment for insubordination, with orders to follow the African coast as far as it went; after three years he had returned by way of Gibraltar claiming to have circumnavigated the continent. But that was centuries back, and the fellow had been put to death for an impious report that at the Southern Cape the sun had been rising in the wrong quarter of the sky. For the ordinary Roman citizen, the earth was still as flat as the palm of his hand.

'Midmost is safest,' the Romans said—a dull, unadventurous,
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home-loving race, who hated the sea, preferred walking to riding, and thought banishment from their country scarcely preferable to death. They had become masters of the world against their real inclinations: the incentive to expand had not been patriotism or a self-imposed civilising mission, as was later alleged, but family rivalry sharpened by greed. The Republican institution of the 'triumph' was to blame. While there was a Sacred King at Rome he won his title by marrying the queen's daughter or younger female relative, not by being the former king's eldest son; but in a prolonged struggle for the succession at the death of King Tullius all the royal princesses were either defiled or killed. This unfortunate accident—not 'a burning love of freedom'—ended the monarchy. However, in the Republic that took its place, the Senate might decree one great privilege of the former king to honour commanders-in-chief who conquered an enemy state: to ride in triumph through Rome, with the captured gods—that is, their sacred statues—carried on carts behind him, himself impersonating and possessed by, the scarlet-faced Oak-god Mars, patron of shepherds. Republican commanders-in-chief, who were also judges of the Supreme Court, could be appointed only from the nobility, and it was rivalry between these noble families as to which could secure most triumphs that started Roman imperialism. For the commoners who did the fighting the rewards were loot, glory, decorations for valour and farm-lands in the conquered country upon their discharge.

The technique of expansion was simple. *Divide et impera*: enter into solemn treaty with a neighbouring country, foment internal disorder, intervene in support of the weaker side on the ground that Roman honour was involved, replace the legitimate ruler with a puppet giving him the status of subject ally; later, goad him into rebellion, seize and sack the country, burn down the temples and carry off the captive gods to adorn a triumph. Conquered territories were put under the control of a provincial governor-general, an ex-Commander-in-chief, who garrisoned it, levied taxes, set up courts of summary justice, and linked the new frontiers with the old by so-called Roman roads—usually built up by Greek engineers and native forced labour. Established social and religious practices were permitted so long as they did not threaten Roman administration or offend against the broad-minded Roman standards of good taste. The new province presently became a spring-board for further aggression.

Rome was now a great jackdaw's nest, with temples and mansions newly built in solid, vulgar, imitation-Greek architectural style—much of it concrete with a thin marble facing—stuffed with loot from more ancient and beautiful cities. Typical scenes of 'the grandeur that was Rome' at the sack of Corinth. A group of smoke-blackened Roman infantrymen squatting on a priceless old master—Aristides's *The God Dionysus*—and shooting craps for possession of sacred chalices

looted from Dionysus's temple. Others hacking souvenirs from the most famous relic of antiquity, the stern of the ship *Argo* which had brought back the Golden Fleece from the Caucasus more than a thousand years before. The Army commander impressing on the transport-captains detailed to convey unique works of art back to Rome—'Mind you, my men, anything you lose you'll have to replace.'

The prisoners captured in these wars became slaves. The chief cause of Rome's industrial backwardness was not a lack of inventiveness but the remarkable cheapness of highly-skilled slave labour. A first-class smith or weaver or potter could often be bought for about the same price that a good dairy cow would fetch nowadays, and was not much more expensive to keep. (For that matter, a Greek school-master or a qualified doctor could be bought for only a few pounds more.) In the Mediterranean the winter, in general, is short and mild, and the Romans could import unlimited cheap grain from Egypt, Libya and Tripoli—it was not for some centuries that over-cultivation made a dust-bowl of the whole North African coast. Olive-oil, dried fish, chick-peas, wine and fruit were also in plentiful supply. Corn-mills driven by water power had been known for some generations yet were little used: it was a principle of industrial economy to keep one's slaves, especially women, in good physical condition by making them do their daily pull at the lever of a hand-mill. And though the carpenter had developed into a highly-skilled cabinet-maker, three more centuries passed before the principle of the watermill was combined with that of the saw. Still more remarkable, the steam-engine had been invented by one Ctesibius—who also invented a water-clock and a hydraulic organ—and a working model had long been on show in the lighthouse at Alexandria where it was used as a donkey-engine. Capitalists were unimpressed: 'Introduce mechanical hauling into industry and encourage laziness in the workers.' In the same spirit the Emperor Tiberius, Augustus's successor, put to death an inventor who brought him a specimen of unbreakable and malleable glass: the discovery would have thrown the jewellery trade into disorder and depreciated the value of gold bullion.

On the whole, slaves were treated well and encouraged to hard work and obedience by being given occasional tips and allowed to earn money in their off hours. Eventually they could hope to buy themselves free, though still owing certain duties as freedmen to their masters; and their children would be free-born. It was dangerous to starve slaves or flog them too freely; indeed, gross cruelty to a slave was now a penal offence. This lesson had been learned in the great Slave Revolt under the gladiator Spartacus two generations before, which had all but succeeded in making the slaves their masters' masters. Slavery was now regarded by industrialists as a safeguard against the pretensions of the free-born working classes, who could not

compete in price against well-organised and highly financed slave-labour. Strikes of working men were exceptional: as when the Levite bakers in the Temple at Jerusalem walked out on being refused a 100 per cent. rise in pay. The High Priest tried to break the strike by importing bakers from the rival Jewish Temple at Leontopolis in Egypt, but their shew-bread was not up to Jerusalem standard and the strikers gained their demands.

At the apex of the social pyramid, which was still nominally Republican, stood the Emperor Augustus. As leader of the winning side in the Civil Wars, caused by murderous rivalry between noble families, he had been invested with temporary dictatorial powers, religious as well as civil, which he often undertook to relinquish when the time should be ripe; but it never was. Under him in descending order of importance came the remains of the nobility, who formed a rubber-stamp Senate and from whom all high-ranking Army officers and Government officials were drawn; next, the Knights, merchant families eligible for less distinguished offices; next, the free-born Roman citizens with full civil rights, including that of voting at the free democratic elections which no longer took place, and exemption from the servile punishment of crucifixion. After these, free-born foreigners with more limited rights; then freedmen; lastly, slaves.

In the higher income groups the birth-rate fell steadily despite bachelor taxes and personal appeals for fertility by the Emperor. Few society women could be bothered to bear children in any quantity and preferred to let their husbands amuse themselves in sporting-houses or with Greek mistresses. The society woman's day was a full one:—'Madam, your warm cinnamon milk, and the bath is ready.'—'Madam, the masseuse, the chiropodist, the hairdresser.'—'The jeweller has called to show madam the Indian emeralds.'—'The chief chef wishes to ask madam's advice about the wild-boar steaks. He is of opinion that they should hang a day or two longer.'—'Has madam decided after all to attend the wedding of her third cousin, the Lady Metella? It is to-day.'—'Madam's pet monkey has, I regret to report, been at his tricks again in the master's study. Yes, madam, I have squared the master's secretary and, please, he has undertaken to procure madam a copy of that charming bawdy little Greek novel that she picked up at Corbulo's yesterday.'—'My Lady Lentula's compliments and will madam confirm last night's bet of one thousand gold pieces to three hundred against Leek Green in the second race to-morrow?'

There was a constant recruitment of the nobility from the merchant class, and rich commoners went up into the merchant class and were privileged to wear a gold thumb-ring and sit in seats reserved for them at the theatre immediately behind the nobility. Morals among the less fortunately born were based largely on social ambition. Convic-

tion for petty felonies disqualified a man from membership of the social clubs of his class ; serious felony degraded him. There was also a vague fear that crimes, even when successfully concealed, might be punished in a shadowy Hell with perpetual tortures. Belief in the islands of Elysium where virtue was rewarded with a life of perpetual bliss was still vague ; besides, Homer had made it clear that these abodes were reserved for royalty. Ordinary citizens became twittering ghosts and went down to Hell, and stayed there, except for an annual ticket-of-leave holiday between owl-cry and cock-crow when their pious descendants put food out for them to lick at, and themselves kept carefully indoors.

Among the governing classes superstitious fear of evil omens, ghosts and bogeys contrasted with the fashionable scepticism about the gods. However, the majesty of Law and the sanctity of treaties depended in theory on the official Olympian cult, and so did the complicated system of national holidays and popular entertainments. Jokes at the expense of cross, lecherous old Father Jupiter, his shrewish wife Juno, and his clever unmarried daughter Minerva—the Roman trinity—were confined to intimate gatherings. But gods and goddesses, so far from being jealous guardians of family morals, permitted and even demanded periodical orgies of drunkenness and sexual promiscuity as healthy vents for popular emotion. Their images also presided at the wild-beast shows, chariot races, gladiatorial fights, dances, plays, musical entertainments and displays of juggling and contortionism, arranged in their honour by endowed priesthoods.

There was no system of public education even for the free-born except in Greek cities that still prided themselves on their high standard of culture, and among the Jews everywhere, for whom attendance at the synagogue school was now a religious obligation. Elsewhere, reading, writing and arithmetic were luxuries reserved for the governing and mercantile classes with their stewards, secretaries, accountants and agents. The Jews were at once a comfort and a worry to the central government. Though industrious, law-abiding and peaceful wherever they were left alone, they were not merely a nation of perhaps three and a half millions settled in Palestine under the rule of Herod the Great, a petty king appointed by the Emperor, with a tribal god, a Temple, and established festivals. They were also a huge religious fraternity, including a great many converts of non-Jewish race, whose first article of faith was that there was only one God, and that intimate contact with Goddess-worshippers was disgusting and sinful. Far more Jews lived outside Palestine than in it, spread about in small or large communities from one end of the world to another and over the edge of the world in Babylonia. They constituted a serious obstacle to the Imperial policy of encouraging provincials to pay divine honours to the Emperor, but were still allowed

perfect religious freedom. The distinction between Semites and Europeans had not yet been drawn ; for the Spartans, who were pure Greeks, officially claimed cousinship with the Jews in virtue of a common descent from Abraham. There was, however, strong local jealousy of Jews who had broken into Greek commercial spheres, with which went resentment of them as over-righteous spoilsports.

Colour was no problem. If the question had ever arisen—but it never did—whether the black races were inferior to the white the answer would immediately have been found in Homer, who was quoted as an inspired authority in all matters of general morality : ‘Homer relates that the blessed gods themselves used to pay complimentary visits to the Blameless Ethiopians.’ Colour was not popularly associated with slavery, since slaves were for the most part white, and nothing prevented coloured monarchs from owning white slaves if honestly come by. Nor was miscegenation frowned upon. Augustus rewarded his ally King Juba II, a Moor, with the hand of Selene, the beautiful daughter of Cleopatra, the Greek queen of Egypt, and his own late brother-in-law Mark Antony.

The Romans were oddly backward in military development except in the arts of entrenchment, siege warfare and infantry drill with javelin and stabbing-sword. They never practised archery even for sport, or formed their own cavalry units, but relied for flank protection of their solid, slow-moving infantry masses on allied lancers and horse-archers, including many coloured squadrons. To join the Army usually meant staying with one’s regiment until the age of sixty, and campaigning was arduous, especially against active and light-armed foresters or mountaineers. The soldier’s load weighed more than 80 lb., which he had to hump for fifteen or twenty miles a day in all weathers ; rations were poor, comforts few, pay irregular, floggings frequent. But peacetime garrison duty in big frontier camps was pleasant enough. A regiment kept the same station for generations, and the camp gradually developed into a city as camp-followers set up general stores under the protection of the fortifications, and soldiers married native women and built permanent huts. In remote outposts of the Empire time dragged. Last year an inscription was found on the site of a small Roman camp on the Libyan frontier to this effect : ‘The Company commander fears that it will be a long time before their promised relief arrives from Rome ; meanwhile the company have made the best of a bad job and hereby dedicate this commodious swimming-pool to the Goddess of Army Welfare.’

The swimming-pool was a Greek institution. It was from the Greeks that the Romans had learned practically all they knew : law, literary technique, public speaking, philosophy, engineering, music, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, stagecraft and acting, domestic and industrial science, sanitation and athletics. But, with a few

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notable exceptions, they were all barbarians at heart, and in athletics, for example, showed no innate sense of sportsmanship or any appreciation of the finer points of play. In the public ring they abandoned the Greek style of boxing with light leather gloves in favour of Mack Sennett knuckle-dusters studded with iron points with which outsize heavyweights slogged great chunks off one another.

No great epidemics of plague, typhus and cholera, such as ravaged Europe in the Middle Ages, are recorded in this epoch. Well-regulated water supply and sewage system in cities, official supervision of food stuffs and wine exposed for sale, and a general determination to enjoy life to the full while it lasted : all this increased popular resistance to disease. Medicine, too, was in a saner state than it reached again before the nineteenth century : cures were effected by tried herbal remedies, fomentations, dieting, exercise, massage and spa-waters. Greek surgeons following in the wake of Roman armies had got a better knowledge of the interior of the human body from battlefield observation than hitherto from dissection of Egyptian mummies in the Alexandrian medical school ; and dentists undertook fillings and complicated bridge work as well as extractions. Mail and transport services ran smoothly throughout the Empire, the insurance rate for shipping was low, now that piracy had been suppressed, and losses by burglary and fire were infrequent. Bureaucracy had just begun rearing its anonymous head : the Emperor Augustus, grown too old and weary to undertake all the official business that falls to a dictator, allowed his ex-slave secretariat to issue minutes, demands and routine orders under his seal.

Typical success story : M. Fullanus Atrox, grandson of a Sicilian slave, has made money in hogs, invested it in a suburban tile-factory and tenement-rents in a central block at Rome. He now sells a half interest in the factory, which is placing heavy orders in Spain and North Africa, buys a villa near Naples with central heating, baths, a picture gallery, formal gardens, stabling, twenty acres of good land and accommodation for fifty slaves—the very villa where his father once stoked the furnace. He marks the happy occasion by presenting a solid gold salver engraved with poplar leaves to the nearby temple of Hercules—it will create a good impression locally. At the same time he sends his son to the university of Athens.

It was a stable world. But the farther from the hub one went the uglier grew the scene, especially after Augustus's succession by less humane and energetic Emperors. When the poorly paid Roman armies of occupation were quartered in the provinces of Asia Minor and Syria, the rich man was bled but the poor man was skinned. Banditry, beggary, blackmail and squalor abounded. Conditions were as bad after the death of Herod the Great in the Protectorate of Judæa, where communism was already in operation among the ascetic

communities of the Dead Sea area, and in the Native State of Galilee. The cost of living in Galilee, during Jesus's Ministry, was excessively high. Everything was taxed separately : houses, land, fruit trees, cattle, carts, fishing-boats, market produce, salt. There was also a poll-tax, a road tax and taxes on exports and imports. Worse : the collection of taxes was leased to private financiers and sub-leased by them to contractors who had to buy police protection at a high cost. The Disciples were poor working men with dependants. When they were on the road their annual out-of-pocket account—apart even from money handed out to the distressed—can hardly have grossed less than £3,000. But out they went, two by two, deploring the instability of a world that was based on greed, lovelessness and the power of the sword. Unexpectedly, St. Luke mentions among their financial backers the wife of a high finance officer of the rapacious Native Court.

The Dragon Cup

BY ARTHUR WALEY

Many people do not know that the valley of Tou-shih, which is now so green, was once sadly barren and dry. Sometimes in the whole year there was no more than a shower or two of rain. In those days there lived in the village of Tou-shih a young man named Li Chung. His family was very poor, and as he could get no work in his own village, he hired himself out as a labourer at a farm many miles away. Here he worked so well that at the end of the year the farmer gave him leave to go home and spend the New Year holiday with his family. He set out rather late in the day; it began to grow dark, and soon the path became narrower and narrower, until there was no path at all. He knew that he had missed his way and was trying to get back to where he had first gone wrong, when he saw a light flickering among the trees. He forced his way through the undergrowth and came at last to a tall gate. He knocked and presently an old man came out. Li explained that he had lost his way and would be glad if he might rest in this house until it was light.

'The Master is away,' the man said, 'and my Lady is there all alone. I cannot very well ask you to come in.'

'Couldn't you at least tell her there is someone at the gate,' said Li, 'and see what she says?'

The man went in, and when he returned he said, 'At first my Lady said it was out of the question, but I told her it was pitch dark outside and that you had lost your way. "I don't think I can very well refuse," she said at last. "Let him in."'

When Li had waited for a little while in the hall, a page arrived, saying, 'My Lady will be with you in a moment.' Li was very surprised, for he knew that the gate-keeper would have reported that he was only a farm-hand, and he had not expected that the mistress of the house would speak to him herself.

She turned out to be a woman of about fifty, dressed in a white jacket and green skirt, very dignified in her bearing, and looking, indeed, so far as Li could judge, like the wife of some nobleman or high dignitary.

'Young man,' she said, when she had learnt from him where he came from and where he was going to, 'as it is so dark and you have lost your way, I don't wonder that you are looking for somewhere to spend the night, and as this is the only dwelling-place for many miles round, you had better stay here. My page will look after you.' She then retired, and he was taken to the servants' quarters, where he was given a meal that was excellently prepared and very enjoyable,

but he noticed that it consisted for the most part of soups and salads made with water-herbs and water-plants, such as cress, water-millet, water-mallow, water-chestnut. After supper he lay down and was soon fast asleep.

Presently, however, he woke up with a start, and found that someone was knocking at his door. A voice, which sounded like that of the lady of the house, asked whether he was awake. He opened the door, and there indeed she was.

'I am very sorry to disturb you,' she said, 'but I am in difficulty and I think you could help me out. I had better tell you at once that this is not a human house; it is a Dragon Manse. This afternoon a messenger came from Heaven, saying that my son, whose turn of duty begins at midnight, was to make rain till the Fifth Watch. To-day he went to a banquet at the Palace of the Turtle King, and I am afraid he has forgotten that he is on duty. I had a feeling that my son might not be back in time; it's not easy to get away from the Turtle King's banquets. I wonder if you would mind taking his place?'

Li Chung stared. 'I don't know how to make rain,' he said, and he thought to himself, 'If I did, my poor village would not be so barren.'—'Couldn't the porter do it?' he asked at last.

'He's too old,' the lady said. 'No one can do it who is over sixty.'

'How about your page?' asked Li.

'He's too young,' she said. 'No one can do it who is under sixteen.'

'Well, I don't mind trying, if you can show me how,' he said. 'But doesn't one have to ride the clouds? I can't do that.'

The lady laughed. 'That's what people always imagine,' she said, 'but it's an absurd idea because, when the rain is over, the clouds vanish, and then what would you ride on? No, it's done in quite a different way. But I think I had better begin by reading to you the instructions that came for my son: "The rain is to extend over a circle having as its centre . . . circumference of 700 leagues . . . shall at no point exceed a maximum density, this density to be calculated . . ."'

The young man stopped her. 'It sounds very difficult,' he said.

'I'm leaving out all the difficult parts,' said the lady. 'You'll very soon get the hang of it. It says something at the end about "care should be taken not to cause undue damage." Don't forget that.'

'What is due damage and what is undue damage?' asked Li Chung.

'I see what's wrong with you,' said the lady, who had by now taken rather a liking for the young man. 'You are anxious to help,

but you have no common sense. It's fortunate that this is really such a simple affair. I will take you to the Saddle.'

She lit a lantern and led him to an outhouse. In the middle of the floor, under a covering of old, tattered brocade, lay something arch-like in shape. She pulled off the covering and he saw an ancient riding-saddle, very much worn and frayed.

'Now we must find the cup,' she said. 'In my husband's time it used always to be kept in that locker. I don't know where my son keeps it.' She peered into the locker, holding up her lantern, and presently brought out a small porcelain cup, less than three inches across, with a design of dragons at play, blue on a white ground, painted both inside and outside the cup. She handed it to Li Chung. It was a little chipped round the bottom and, like the saddle, it looked very old.

'You'd better sit on the saddle before I fill the cup,' she said, and when he was seated, facing the door, she took the cup and filled it with water from an old brown jar. Then handing it to him she said, 'Just sprinkle as you go, never more than a drop or two at a time. You needn't worry too much about heights and distances. The saddle is not as new to the business as you are. Just let it carry you.'

While she spoke, the saddle rose a little from the floor and moved towards the door. Li Chung gripped the pommel firmly with one hand and held the cup in the other.

'You can begin now,' the lady called after him, and, as he rose above the great wood where he had been lost, he began very evenly and soberly to sprinkle a few drops as he flew. It was beginning to get light. Looking down, he saw some hills that he thought he knew and presently he was right above his native village.

'Poor souls,' he thought, 'they don't get much rain. I'll give them just a drop or two extra.' It was so pleasant to think of the wells filling and the crops reviving, that in the end he gave them twenty drops.

After circling about for an hour or so, the saddle landed him safely at the Dragon Manse. But long before he got there, he had used up the last drop of water in the cup, and whole districts got no rain at all.

The lady was waiting for him, and looked very much upset. 'It's too bad,' she said. 'Why couldn't you do as you were told? At Tou-shih they had a cloud-burst; you must have sprinkled at least twenty drops. And all round Lan-ying they got no rain at all. Didn't you hear me when I told you to sprinkle one drop at a time?'

The young man hung his head and could not say a word.

'You may wonder how I came to know of it so soon,' said the lady. 'These things don't take long to get round. The people

of Tou-shih thought their last hour was come and all rushed to the village shrine. The village-god at once reported to Heaven and Heaven, in turn, called for a full report from my son. You've got us into terrible trouble, and it wouldn't surprise me if my son lost his job.'

Li Chung began to stammer an apology, but the lady interrupted him.

'I suppose it is really all my fault,' she said. 'After all, you are a human being, and human beings don't understand about rain.'

Later in the day he got back to his own village. The worst was over, but the streets were still littered with wreckage. People were busy mopping their floors and hunting about for belongings that had been carried down the street by the flood. They were all saying that there must be a reason for this visitation of Heaven, and presently they decided to use a witch to find out who it was among them that had offended. But the witch they generally employed was much in request and had not a free day for a long while.

Shortly afterwards a stranger came to the village. She was an old woman. On her left arm she carried a basket and with her right hand she beat a little drum that was slung over her shoulder. As she walked down the street, she cried :

'Lizard's Tail and Dragon's Tongue,
Balsam, Basil, Virgin's Bower,
Pipewort, Smartwort and Clearweed,
Yellow-bark and Guelder-flower.

Herbs, oh what good herbs !'

Many of the people bought one medicine or another, and the effect was so good that they felt this old herb-seller must be something out of the ordinary. The headman of the village asked her to drink a cup of tea at his house, and here the talk soon turned upon the great flood and the need to find out why Heaven had sent them such a disaster. The headman noticed that the old woman's drum was not just a plain drum, such as pedlars use, but had on its sides a strange design of dragons at play, blue on a white ground.

'Do you, aged madam,' he asked, 'perhaps know something of witchcraft ?'

'Certainly I do,' said the old woman, 'and if you will leave it to me, I can easily find out the reason of your calamity.'

The headman did not much like using an unknown witch ; but it so happened that some of her clearweed had done his daughter a great deal of good, and he was sure that when she got to work, he would soon see whether she understood her business. So it was arranged that when darkness came, the old woman should show them what she could do.

All that day Li Chung had been mending people's doors at the far end of the village. When he heard that there was to be an ordeal

to find out whose sins had brought disaster on the village, he felt very much alarmed. However, there was nothing for it but to come and sit with the rest of the villagers. The headman sat on a great stone outside his house holding a torch; the people sat in a circle round a great stack of brush-wood.

The old woman came out of the headman's house beating on her drum, with her shawl thrown over her head. She paused beside the stack and told the people to set it alight. As the flames danced up, she tore off her head-shawl and leapt on to the burning stack, drumming all the while. The fierce firelight beat on to her face, and to his horror Li Chung saw that it was the lady of the Dragon Manse. He hid his face in his hands and did not dare look again for some while. When at last he looked up, she had stopped drumming, but, standing quite untouched amid the flames, she was pointing at something with her drum-stick. Li almost fainted with fear; but it dawned upon him at last that she was not pointing at him at all. It seemed as though she were pointing at the headman, but now she leapt down from the blazing stack and, drumming with one hand, she pointed quite clearly, not at the headman, but at the stone on which he was sitting.

It had been agreed that whoever was found guilty should be thrown into the pond. More torches were lit and the village people, greatly relieved that only a thing without feelings had to be flung away out of their midst, rolled the big stone into the pond. When the headman looked for the witch, to settle up with her and offer her a little refreshment, she was nowhere to be found.

Li Chung felt that the lady had come on purpose to save him, and when someone said he thought he had seen her going up the path to the temple on the hill, Li Chung made up his mind that, dark though it was, he must try to find her and thank her. On the way to the temple she was nowhere to be seen, but when he entered the gate-house where guests were received, he found her already sitting on a bench, with her drum and basket at her side.

'You need not thank me,' she said. 'It is true I came to help you; but I also need your help. You have got me into rather worse trouble than I expected. My case came up before the Court of the Dragon of Lung-men, and I was found guilty of revealing the secrets of the Dragon State. My son had already been suspended from rain-making, and I was condemned to come into the World of Men and trudge about from village to village, as an old herb-seller.'

'I do honestly wish there was something I could do for you,' said Li.

'You might go to the Dragon Court,' she said, 'and see if you can get my sentence quashed. You could at least tell them you haven't let the secret go any further.'

'I am afraid that would not be much good,' said Li.

'Well, for Heaven's sake go and try,' said the lady.

'How am I to get there?' said Li. 'Lung-men is a long way off, and I have not any money.'

'Oh, I can get you there easily enough,' she said. 'I have not quite lost all my magic.'

On a table in the corner of the guest-room was a relief-map showing all the Hills and Seas of the earth. The lady picked up a leaf that had blown in at the door and, laying it on the map, she touched it with a magic herb.

'I am sorry I have not the Saddle with me,' she said, 'but this will serve your purpose and perhaps be rather more comfortable.'

Then she told him to look fixedly at the leaf, and as he did so, it grew larger and larger, and finally turned into a little boat, moored at the side of a great river. He stepped into the boat, untied the rope and found himself floating swiftly downstream. He passed close to many other boats and by the quays and wharves of great cities, but no one seemed to notice him, and he himself felt as though a kind of curtain or mist separated him from all that was going on around him. Sometimes he tried to speak, but every sound he made trailed after him with a strange lingering echo. The river grew narrower and narrower, and soon he was between high cliffs of rock that almost shut out the sky. Then the cliffs quite closed above him, and he was in a huge cavern, lit only by a soft light that shone from under the water. At one side was a ledge of rock with a portico behind it, on the steps of which some soldiers were playing dominoes. His boat stopped alongside the ledge and, tying it to an iron ring that hung from the rock, he got out and walked straight up the steps. The soldiers shouted after him, and then went on with their game. Pushing back a heavy bronze door, he found himself in what was evidently a magistrate's court-room. The magistrate was very old and wrinkled, with a scraggy neck and hands like the paws of a tortoise. A plaintiff and defendant were kneeling in front of him, and all around were ushers, clerks and men-at-arms.

'We're madly busy,' said the Tortoise Judge, looking up at Li Chung. 'Didn't the guard tell you the Court was sitting?'

'They were busy playing dominoes,' said Li Chung.

'It's a fascinating game,' said the judge. 'I play it a good deal myself.'

'I've come about the lady of the Dragon Manse,' said Li Chung quickly, seeing that the judge was getting into a better humour.

'Well, what about her?' said the judge.

'You condemned her in this court a few days ago,' said Li.

'I did nothing of the kind,' said the Tortoise Judge, getting angry again. 'I've never heard of her.'

A clerk got up and whispered something in his ear.

'It appears that the case was taken by the Water-snake Judge during my absence at a wedding,' said the Tortoise. 'What was the charge?'

'Your worship,' said the clerk, 'it was an offence against the Dragon Secrets Act.'

'What did Justice Snake charge her with?' asked the judge. (The tortoise and the snake have been on very bad terms since the beginning of the world, and the judge welcomed this opportunity of catching the snake napping.) 'I'd better see the charge-sheet,' he said. He hummed and hawed through part of the charge and then came to a part which said, '... that the accused, not being a minor or person afflicted with lunacy, did harm to the Dragon State by revealing Dragon secrets.'

'Was evidence of harm produced?' said the judge.

'No, your worship,' said the clerk.

'Just like Snake!' said the judge, delighted. 'What was the sentence?'

'Banishment to the World of Men, your worship, in the capacity of an old herb-seller.'

'Scandalous!' said the Tortoise Judge. 'I shall have that sentence quashed. Send for the lady at once.'

A messenger started at once.

'You've been very helpful,' the judge said to Li Chung, and shook hands with him warmly.

Li Chung's boat was still moored outside the portico. He turned it round and it sped away upstream as easily as it had come down. When the river had broadened and the cliffs flattened down, he presently saw the figure of a lady, dressed in a white jacket and green skirt, come skimming towards him over the water. It was the lady of the Dragon Manse, looking just as he had seen her at their first meeting.

'I told you it was worth trying,' she said, pausing for a moment beside his boat. 'I must not wait now, but I thought I should just like to tell you that I shall try to arrange for your village to have a better rainfall.' Then she hastened on.

The boat began to get smaller and smaller. Li Chung was afraid he would soon be in the water, but instead of that he found himself in the guest-room of the temple near his native village, staring at the map. When he got outside it was raining, and as he went down the hill he saw that many slopes that used to be barren were already covered with green. For a day of Dragon Time is a year in the world of men.

Once he tried to go again to the Dragon Manse to pay his respects to its mistress; but search though he might, he could not find the place where, groping in the darkness, he had strayed from the right path.

The Patrician in Politics

Some Reflections on Re-Reading Baudelaire

BY MARTIN TURNELL

I

The surprising thing about the nineteenth century is not that it was one of the greatest ages in French literature, but that such an age should have produced any literature at all. It was like the seventeenth century an age of transition, an age in which civilisation was undergoing revolutionary changes, but there the resemblance ends. 'For the creation of a masterwork of literature,' wrote Matthew Arnold in his great essay on *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time*, 'two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment'; and he goes on to speak of the poet in the age of Shakespeare as living in 'a current of ideas in the highest degree animating and nourishing to the creative power.' No one doubts 'the power of the man' in the nineteenth century nor that he lived in 'a current of ideas'; but so far from being 'animating and nourishing to the creative power,' those ideas were in appearance at any rate fundamentally hostile to all art. This is how a contemporary prophet described them:

The crisis [wrote Saint-Simon], lies essentially in the transition from a feudal and theological system to an industrial and scientific system. France has become a vast factory and the nation a great workshop. The true temporal power is to be found today in industry and the true spiritual power in the men of learning.

There is truth in this diagnosis, but the pathetic faith in industrial and scientific progress does small credit to the descendant of the great Duc de Saint-Simon. Later critics have perceived the same symptoms, but have drawn different conclusions from them.

The old aristocratic order had fallen [writes Mr. Middleton Murry]; there was no new democratic order to supply its place: in the interval arose, like a growth of weeds on the site of a demolished building, as the sole principle of spiritual and social order, that reverence for wealth for its own sake which distinguished nineteenth-century France. Guizot's *Enrichissez-vous* marked a social nadir.¹

It was [adds Mr. T. S. Eliot] an age of bustle, programmes, platforms, scientific progress, humanitarianism and revolutions which improved nothing, an age of progressive degradation.²

¹ *Countries of the Mind*, I, p. 117.

² *Selected Essays*, p. 375.

It was, indeed, an age of extreme economic individualism, rampant industrialism, the spread of urban civilisation—'the hideous and uncontrolled eruption of great cities'—and the emergence of a new and aggressive middle class. Its large gestures produced meagre results—the annexation of Tahiti and the abortive revolutions which seem trivial compared with the dangers of our own time. But the materialism and the flashy optimism did their work only too thoroughly, undermining the system which to Saint-Simon seemed so firmly founded and preparing the way for the collapse of France before the hordes of Teutonic barbarism.

No one was more conscious of the weaknesses of the age, no one saw through its facile slogans more completely than Baudelaire. There is one striking difference between his position and that of the great writers of the past. The poet's function had undergone a change. He did not find the materials of his art already present. He had first to create the conditions in which it was possible to write poetry at all. This involved not merely the creation of 'a current of ideas' which would animate and nourish his art, but the destruction of ideas which were hostile to it. It thus happens that instead of glorifying the existing order as the great poets of the past had done, a good deal of Baudelaire's work—the poetry as well as the prose—is an indictment of a corrupt society. It is indeed one of the surest signs of his genius that his poetry sprang from a clash between the individual and society, that the difficulties of writing in such a period became one of the sources of his strength. It is because the evils which he attacked have lost none of their virulence with the passing of time that he still speaks to us more urgently, more intimately than any other modern poet.

I have written of Baudelaire's poetry in other places.¹ In this paper I wish to discuss the scattered comments on society and politics which are to be found in his prose writings. Baudelaire was something of a *mystificateur* and his gestures have not always been understood; but beneath the nineteenth-century décors which sometimes obscure his thought, there is a remarkable unity. The unity is not philosophical, for in spite of brilliant *aperçus* he was not a consistent thinker. It is not theological, for in spite of a sound grasp of Catholic theology he cannot in any useful sense be described as 'a Catholic poet.' It lies in his sensibility and in a certain attitude of mind in which the religious factor plays an important but unusual part.² 'His business,' wrote Mr. Eliot, 'was not to practise Christianity, but—what was more important for his time—to assert its necessity.' Although Mr. Eliot's reference in the same essay to Baudelaire's 'theological inno-

¹ *Horizon*, August, 1941. * *The Wind and the Rain*, Spring, 1943.

² Cf. Baudelaire's remark in his diary: 'Ne méprisez la sensibilité de personne. La sensibilité de chacun, c'est son génie.'

cence' is very wide of the mark, his comment helps to explain the peculiarity of Baudelaire's religious position. His work was not founded on dogmas which formed an integral part of his everyday life. His religion was essentially and tragically incomplete. When he looked at the world about him, he saw everywhere the working of some evil force.

Étant descendu très sévèrement dans le souvenir de mes rêveries [he said in a letter to Flaubert in 1860], je me suis aperçu que, de tout temps, j'ai été obsédé par l'impossibilité de me rendre compte de certaines actions ou pensées soudaines de l'homme, sans l'hypothèse de l'intervention d'une force méchante, extérieure à lui. Voilà un gros aveu dont tout le XIX^{ème} siècle conjuré ne me fera pas rougir. Remarquez bien que je ne renonce pas au plaisir de changer d'idée ou de me contredire.¹

It was characteristic of his outlook that he should have dwelt mainly on the negative consequences of his 'great admission.'

I desire with all my heart and with a sincerity that no one but myself can appreciate [he wrote to his mother], to believe that a being who is external to me is interested in my fate. But what can one do to convince oneself that it is true?

He uses Christianity to measure the debasement of his time, but he cannot believe that it is true. He seems to have felt that he was, unwillingly, part of a general drift away from Christian principles. 'True civilisation,' runs the famous aphorism in his diary, 'does not lie in progress or steam or table turning. It lies in the diminution of the marks of original sin.' 'True civilisation' is contrasted with what passed for civilisation in the nineteenth century. The contemptuous reference to 'table turning' reveals his opinion of material progress and steam, and the last sentence emphasises the moral effort that is necessary to preserve 'true civilisation.'

C'est ici une belle occasion, en vérité [he wrote at the beginning of his great study of Constantin Guys], pour établir une théorie rationnelle et historique du beau, en opposition avec la théorie du beau unique et absolu; pour montrer que le beau est toujours, inévitablement, d'une composition double, bien que l'impression qu'il produit soit une; car la difficulté de discerner les éléments variables du beau dans l'unité de l'impression n'infirme en rien la nécessité de la variété dans sa composition. Le beau est fait d'un élément éternel,

¹ *Lettres 1841-1866*, Paris, 1906, pp. 267-8. His contemporaries would probably have been surprised by Mr. Eliot's estimate of his theological knowledge. 'I only knew the author of the *Fleurs du mal* very slightly,' wrote one of them, 'but I met him three or four times with Barbey d'Aurevilly who honoured me with his friendship. I can remember a very astonishing conversation between these two men of genius on the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It made one wonder whether the pair of them had not studied theology in some seminary when they were young.' (Crépet, *Charles Baudelaire*, p. 84 n.)

invariable, dont la quantité est excessivement difficile à déterminer, et d'un élément relatif, circonstanciel, qui sera, si l'on veut, tour à tour ou tout ensemble, l'époque, la mode, la morale, la passion. Sans ce second élément, qui est comme l'enveloppe amusante, titillante, apéritive, du divin gâteau, le premier élément serait indigestible, inappréciable, non adapté et non approprié à la nature humaine.

This passage illustrates the way in which the religious view of life was *necessary* to Baudelaire's own conception of life and art. For the view that there is a permanent, unchanging element in beauty leads logically to the belief that there is something permanent and unchanging in human nature which gives the work of art—the *divin gâteau*—its substance and its ultimate value. This view is developed in a later passage of the same study :

La plupart des erreurs relatives au beau naissent de la fausse conception du XVIII^e siècle relative à la morale. La nature fut prise dans ce temps-là comme base, source et type de tout bien et de tout beau possibles. La négation du péché originel ne fut pas pour peu de chose dans l'aveuglement général de cette époque. . . La nature n'enseigne rien, ou presque rien, c'est-à-dire qu'elle *contraint* l'homme à dormir, à boire, à manger, et à se garantir, tant bien que mal, contre les hostilités de l'atmosphère. * C'est elle aussi qui pousse l'homme à tuer son semblable, à le manger, à le séquestrer, à le torturer. . . . C'est la philosophie (je parle de la bonne), c'est la religion qui nous ordonne de nourrir des parents pauvres et infirmes. La nature (qui n'est pas autre chose que la voix de notre intérêt) nous commande de les assommer.

Although this passage is coloured by Baudelaire's Manichean attitude towards nature, it shows a deep appreciation of the importance of religion for European civilisation and comes near to anticipating recent distinctions between 'culture' and 'civilisation.' He approaches the problem not as a philosopher but as an artist. He disapproves of the theory of the perfectibility of man because he feels that it leads to materialism in art as well as life and prefers the doctrine of original sin because he believes that it produces better art.

This leads naturally to a discussion of his conception of the civilised man, to the definition of the 'dandy' in the same essay :

Que ces hommes se fassent nommer raffinés, incroyables, beaux, lions ou dandys, tous sont issus d'une même origine ; tous participent du même caractère d'opposition et de révolte ; tous sont des représentants de ce qu'il y a de meilleur dans l'orgueil humain, de ce besoin, trop rare chez ceux d'aujourd'hui, de combattre et de détruire la trivialité. De là naît, chez les dandys, cette attitude hautaine de caste provocante, même dans sa froideur. Le dandysme apparaît surtout aux époques transitoires où la démocratie n'est pas encore toute-puissante, où l'aristocratie n'est que partiellement chancelante

et avilie. Dans le trouble de ces époques, quelques hommes déclassés, dégoûtés, désœuvrés, mais tous riches de force native, peuvent concevoir le projet de fonder une espèce nouvelle d'aristocratie, d'autant plus difficile à rompre qu'elle sera basée sur les facultés les plus précieuses, les plus indestructibles, et sur les dons célestes que le travail et l'argent ne peuvent conférer. Le dandysme est le dernier éclat d'héroïsme dans les décadences. . .

Some of these sentences have a melodramatic ring and the word 'dandy' has not worn well ; but when it is divested of its nineteenth-century trappings, the attitude that Baudelaire is defending is seen to be not only clear and consistent but profoundly serious. He may have enjoyed 'baiting the bourgeois,' but he was not a dilettante. His dandyism must not be confused with Théophile Gautier's taste in waistcoats, Gérard de Nerval's exploit with the lobster or the apparition of George Sand arrayed in male attire, booted and spurred, with a cigar in her mouth. It sprang from a genuine concern for human integrity, from a recognition of the dignity of man. It asserted definite standards in 'an age of progressive degradation,' was a challenge to the indifference to civilised values, 'the reverence for wealth for its own sake' and the complacency which were sapping the foundations of society.

We can go further than this. What Baudelaire was defending was the patrician attitude and his defence is as valid and necessary today as it was in 1860. The middle classes, as the name suggests, are a fluctuating body. Already in seventeenth-century France we can distinguish three main groups. There were the patricians who tended to rise out of their class, to intermarry with the nobility or, like the writers, to move in Court circles by virtue of their calling. At the other end of the scale were the provincials who were drifting towards the peasantry and who, living dim, ignorant and impoverished on their farms, were the constant butt of seventeenth-century wit. In between these extremes came the bourgeoisie proper—the doctors, lawyers and merchants—who were prosperous and respectable and in many ways the backbone, the true moral core of France.

Whatever the internal divisions of society, seventeenth-century civilisation was an aristocratic one. It was to an aristocratic élite that the writer could appeal and one of the characters who represents Molière's own views declares in the *Critique de l'école des femmes* that—

La grande épreuve de toutes vos comédies, c'est le jugement de la Cour ; que c'est son goût qu'il faut étudier pour trouver l'art de réussir ; qu'il n'y a point de lieu où les décisions soient si justes ; et, sans mettre en ligne de compte tous les gens savants qui y sont, que, du simple bon sens naturel et du commerce de tout le beau monde, on s'y fait une manière d'esprit qui, sans comparaison, juge plus finement des choses que tout le savoir enrouillé des pédants.

In the nineteenth century the situation described by Molière had ceased to exist. The aristocracy, which had been the custodian of civilised values, had been swept away in France and the middle classes in Europe transformed by a revolution which was industrial in England and political in France. The immediate result was an expansion of the bourgeoisie, which ceased to be the backbone of France and adopted that outlook which is sometimes stigmatised as 'lower middle class'—preoccupation with money, hostility to art and indifference in religion.

The natural outcome was, as Baudelaire remarks, for the intellectuals to close their ranks and present the united front of an 'exclusive caste' in the face of the new disorder. They felt that their mission was to form a new aristocracy based on indestructible values. It is the aristocratic element which gives patrician art its special characteristics. The patrician is essentially an individualist and his work tends to be sensitive, subtle, analytical, precarious and abstruse—qualities which more than any others arouse the hostility of the bourgeois.

In Baudelaire's time the patrician, besides asserting the primacy of spiritual and intellectual values, was obliged to perform important negative functions which are defined in his description of the dandy. He had to fight against the growing vulgarisation of life and the debasement of civilised values. In his poetry and the *Petits poèmes en prose* Baudelaire displays considerable sympathy for the working classes, but he had no patience with the bourgeois. He saw in him the real enemy; it was against him that the attack was directed and in attacking the bourgeois he was doing for France what Matthew Arnold in his attacks on the 'philistine' was doing for England.

Our puritan middle classes [wrote Arnold in a description of the situation in England], present a defective type of religion, a narrow range of intellect and instruction, a stunted sense of beauty, a low standard of manners.¹

If [said Baudelaire in his diary], if a poet asked the State for the right to keep a few bourgeois in his stable, everyone would be greatly astonished; but if a bourgeois asked for some roast poet, it would be considered quite natural.

This violent tone, which goes far beyond Arnold's well-bred sarcasm, is characteristic of Baudelaire's pronouncements. We may think, too, that it reveals a clearer appreciation of the danger and urgency of the position. Arnold's 'low standard of manners' and 'stunted sense of beauty' is certainly an understatement. It was above all their *aggressiveness* which stamped the new middle classes. For, as one writer has recently pointed out, it is not until the middle

¹ *Mixed Essays*, p. 101.

of the nineteenth century that we first meet violent outbursts against art on the part of the general public, that exhibitions are broken up and distinguished writers brought before the courts on frivolous charges of immorality. The rift has spread and shows no signs of being healed. When we look back over the last hundred years, we can see the antagonists circling round one another waiting to strike. The attacks on Baudelaire and Flaubert have their counterpart in the recent storm over Matisse and Picasso and at bottom the motives are the same. The problem is not an aesthetic but a psychological one. The nineteenth-century preoccupation with money and material comfort and the desperation with which they clung to *idées reçues* were the result of an immense sense of insecurity, an overwhelming need to find something solid and enduring in a world of dissolving values. Anything which threatened to aggravate their insecurity, or even to draw attention to it, was an evil that had to be resisted at all costs. In the prosecutions for immorality, the artist became the scapegoat whose sacrifice restored or was intended to restore their shattered complacency.

The violence of Baudelaire's counter-attacks was imposed on him by the lonely eminence of his position. He avoided the temptation of a later generation to seek refuge in the Ivory Tower; and the courage and determination with which he faced the problems of his age is not merely the measure of his greatness, it stamps his attitude as an heroic one.

This provides a clue to the connection in Baudelaire's mind between poetry and politics and his immense disgust for what he called 'the rising tide of democracy.' An English writer has to remember that constitutional democracy has triumphed in this country in spite of its theoretical weaknesses, and that in paying tribute to its success in the sphere of practical politics, we are inclined to overlook the price which has been paid in other fields. A Frenchman, writing in a country where parliamentary democracy was the outcome of the breakdown of absolute government and was only a qualified success, was naturally more conscious of the sacrifices which it involved, and this consciousness makes Baudelaire's position similar to Arnold's. With this reservation, there is no doubt that Baudelaire was right in his view that the disappearance of the aristocracy and the increasing power of the State was leading to spiritual and intellectual bankruptcy. The disadvantages of his solution—the formation of a new aristocracy—were to a large extent inevitable. It meant that for some time at any rate art would cease to be popular and would appeal only to an élite. That it should still be so in the twentieth century is due in part to an aggravation of the situation described by Baudelaire and in part to the timid and sometimes wilful attitude of later writers. The solution does not lie, as we can now see, in the restoration of the

old aristocracy; it lies, as one writer put it some time ago, in combining 'the democratic ideal—full and equal opportunity for all—with that loyalty to what is genuinely superior which aristocratic societies have in the past—with more or less truth—claimed as their justification.'¹

2

Baudelaire's own excursions into practical politics and his actions at the time of the Revolution of 1848 seem at first perplexing.

On the evening of 4th February, 1848 [wrote a contemporary], I met him at the Carrefour de Buci in the middle of a mob which had just looted a gunsmith's shop. He was carrying a beautiful double barrelled gun shining and new, and a superb cartridge case of yellow leather, which was as new as the gun. I shouted to him and he came towards me pretending to be very animated. 'I have just fired a shot,' he said. When I glanced smilingly at his weapon, which had obviously never been used, and remarked: 'Not for the Republic, surely?' he did not reply. He shouted a good deal and the tune was always the same. 'We must go and shoot General Aupick.' I had never before been so painfully struck by the lack of character in this nature which was in so many ways so fine and original.²

About this time Baudelaire and two of his friends, Champfleury and Toubin, founded a revolutionary paper called *Le Salut Public*. Only two numbers appeared before it failed through lack of funds. Baudelaire was again among the insurgents in June 1848 and his flirtations with political journalism continued, not very successfully, for another three years. After 1851 he ceased to take any active part in political ventures.

Whatever Left-wing critics may think, there are no grounds for supposing that Baudelaire ever had much sympathy for socialism. He himself seems to have felt some surprise in later life when he recalled his part in the Revolution of 1848. 'My intoxication in 1848,' he notes in his diary. 'What was the nature of this intoxication? Thirst for revenge. Natural delight in destruction . . . The memory of books that I had read.' In another place: 'I can understand a man deserting one cause in order to discover how it would feel to serve a different one.' There is no doubt some truth in these explanations. Baudelaire may have felt that the outlook for civilisation was so poor that there was nothing left except destruction, and we recall that one of the characteristics of the dandy was an attitude of 'opposition and revolt.' It was not for nothing, however, that he had cried: 'We must go and shoot General Aupick.' His dislike of his stepfather can to a large extent be explained on psycho-

¹ L. C. Knights in *Scrutiny*, Spring, 1943, p. 228.

² Cr  pet, *Op. cit.*, pp. 78-9.

logical grounds and there is no need to dwell on the remark in a letter to his mother : ' One ought not to remarry when one has a son like me.' But his dislike was not purely personal. Aupick seemed to him to be the symbol of the hated bourgeois—the enemy of poetry, the representative of middle-class respectability. He was not fighting for the Republic, but against the bourgeois, and the Revolution offered a chance of overturning the existing order and making a fresh start.

His references to politics in his diary emphasise that his standpoint was a detached and, in a sense, a negative one.

L'imagination humaine [he wrote], peut concevoir, sans trop de peine, des républiques ou autres États, communautaires, dignes de quelque gloire, s'ils sont dirigés par des hommes sacrés, par de certains aristocrates. Mais ce n'est pas particulièrement par des institutions politiques que se manifestera la ruine universelle, ou le progrès universel ; car peu m'importe le *nom*. Ce sera par l'avilissement des cœurs. Ai-je besoin de dire que le peu qui restera de politique se débattrra péniblement dans les étreintes de l'animalité générale, et que les gouvernants seront forcés, pour se maintenir et pour créer un fantôme d'ordre, de recourir à des moyens qui feraient frissonner notre humanité actuelle, pourtant si endurcie ?—Alors, le fils fuira la famille...il la fuira, non pas pour chercher des aventures héroïques, non pas pour délivrer une beauté prisonnière dans une tour, non pas pour immortaliser un galetas par de sublimes pensées, mais pour fonder un commerce, pour s'enrichir, et pour faire concurrence à son infâme papa, fondateur et actionnaire d'un journal qui répandra les lumières et qui ferait considérer le *Siècle* d'alors comme un suppôt de la superstition.

Il n'y a de gouvernement raisonnable et assuré que l'aristocratique [he says in another entry]. Monarchie ou république, basées sur la démocratie, sont également absurdes et faibles.

Another entry has a prophetic note :

Politique.—En somme, devant l'histoire et devant le peuple français, la grande gloire de Napoléon III aura été de prouver que le premier venu peut, en s'emparant du télégraphe et de l'Imprimerie nationale, gouverner une grande nation.

'The people worship authority,' he declared, and this was the constant burden of his writings. He saw a gullible humanity selling out in the name of democracy all that made life worth living and being swamped by material progress. He saw it delivering itself over, bound hand and foot, to an immense army of officials, of being transformed with terrifying rapidity into a nation of functionaries and robots :

La mécanique nous aura tellement américanisés, le progrès aura si bien atrophie en nous toute la partie spirituelle, que rien, parmi les rêveries sanguinaires, sacrilèges ou anti-naturelles des utopistes, ne pourra être comparé à ses résultats positifs. Je demande à tout

homme qui pense de me montrer ce qui subsiste de la vie. De la religion, je crois inutile d'en parler et d'en chercher les restes, puisque se donner la peine de nier Dieu est le seul scandale, en pareilles matières. La propriété avait disparu virtuellement avec la suppression du droit d'aînesse ; mais le temps viendra où l'humanité, comme un ogre vengeur, arrachera leur dernier morceau à ceux qui croient avoir hérité légitimement des révolutions. Encore, là ne serait pas le mal suprême.

Baudelaire does not put forward any practical plan of action. He was not a reformer or a crusader in the accepted sense. His work was to draw attention to the dangers that beset his age, and his own answer, in so far as there can be any answer, is to be found in his poetry, which is one of the summits of patrician art and which enshrines those civilised values which have been so savagely trampled underfoot in practically every European country. The events of the last seventy years have fulfilled his greatest fears and the remarkable passage in his diary, in which he declares that the ruin of civilisation will be the result not of the collapse of institutions but of the debasement of the human heart, puts the emphasis in the right place. It is humanity and not political institutions which has brought us to our present pass. The state of Europe today is the result of the triumph of that section of the community against which Baudelaire's fiercest onslaughts were directed, and it must not be forgotten that the revolutions in Germany and Russia were essentially revolutions of the lower middle-class.

The end of the war, so far from solving the problem, has simply enabled us to perceive the imminence of the danger. It has been repeatedly pointed out that slogans like 'democracy' and 'liberty' are in danger of becoming the vehicles of a new and insidious totalitarianism. The great danger is that in the name of planning we are solemnly preparing to enthrone Banausos as the Great Dictator, to sacrifice civilisation to the bourgeois ethos, an intellectual order to the order of an omniscient state run by an immense army of officials armed with absolute powers of spiritual life and death. No thoughtful person can stand by and watch with equanimity the growth of a world in which culture is planned out of existence, a world of unending regimentation founded on Reports and White Papers ; a world in which the policeman can step in and throw us into prison if we lose our jobs or fall behind with our insurance contributions, a world planned on the principle of levelling down. It is for these reasons that we should meditate with gratitude the message of the greatest European poet of the nineteenth century and keep before us the patrician ideal which Newman once defined as 'freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation and wisdom.'

The East Wing

A Tragedy in the Manner of the Discursive Dramatists

By 'SAKI'

[Discovered among his manuscripts after the author's death, this story by 'Saki' is here published for the first time. Anticipations of the work of some distinguished later humorists will not escape the notice of discerning CORNHILL readers.]

It was early February and the hour was somewhere about two in the morning. Most of the house-party had retired to bed. Lucien Wattleskeat had merely retired to his bedroom, where he sat over the still vigorous old-age of a fire, balancing the entries in his bridge-book. They worked out at seventy-eight shillings on the right side as the result of two evening's play which was not so bad, considering that the stakes had been regrettably low.

Lucien was a young man who regarded himself with an undemonstrative esteem, which the undiscerning were apt to mistake for indifference. Several women of his acquaintance were on the look-out for nice girls for him to marry, a vigil in which he took no share.

The atmosphere of the room was subtly tinged with an essence of tuberoses, and more strongly impregnated with the odour of wood-fire smoke. Lucien noticed this latter circumstance as he finished his bridge audit, and also noticed that the fire in the grate was not a wood one, neither was it smoking.

A stronger smell of smoke blew into the room a moment later as the door opened and Major Bovertry, pyjama-clad and solemnly excited, stood in the doorway. 'The house is on fire!' he exclaimed.

'Oh,' said Lucien, 'is that it. I thought perhaps you had come to talk to me. If you would shut the door the smoke wouldn't pour in so.'

'We ought to do something,' said the Major with conviction.

'I hardly know the family,' said Lucien, 'but I suppose one will be expected to be present, even though the fire does not appear to be in this wing of the house.'

'It may spread to here,' said the Major.

'Well, let's go and look at it,' assented Lucien, 'though it's against my principles to meet trouble half-way.'

'Grasp your nettle, that's what I say,' observed Bovertry.

'In this case, Major, it's not our nettle,' retorted Lucien, carefully shutting the bedroom door behind him.

In the passage they encountered Canon Clore, arrayed in a dressing-gown of Albanian embroidery, which might have escaped remark in a *Te Deum* service in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Moscow, but which looked out of place in the corridor of an English country house. But then, as Lucien observed to himself, at a fire one can wear anything.

'The house is on fire,' said the Canon, with the air of one who lends dignity to a fact by according it gracious recognition.

'It's in the East wing, I think,' said the Major.

'I suppose it is another case of suffragette militancy,' said the Canon, 'I am in favour of women having the vote myself, even if, as some theologians assert, they have no souls. That, indeed, would furnish an additional argument for including them in the electorate, so that all sections of the community, the soulless and the souled, might be represented, and being in favour of the female vote I am naturally in favour of militant means to achieve it. Belonging as I do to a Church Militant I should be inconsistent if I professed to stand aghast at militant methods in vote-winning warfare. But at the same time I cannot resist pointing out that the women who are using violent means to wring the vote—right—from a reluctant legislature are destroying the value of the very thing for which they are struggling. A vote is of no conceivable consequence to anybody unless it carries with it the implicit understanding that majority-rule is the settled order of the day, and the Militants are actively engaged in demonstrating that any minority armed with a box of matches and a total disregard of consequences can force its opinions and its wishes on an indifferent or hostile community. It is not merely manor houses they are destroying, but the whole fabric of government by ballot box.'

'Oughtn't we to be doing something about the fire,' said Major Bovertry.

'I was going to suggest something of the sort myself,' said the Canon stiffly.

'Tomorrow may be too late, as the advertisements in the newspapers say,' observed Lucien.

In the hall they met their hostess, Mrs. Gramplain.

'I'm so glad you have come,' she said; 'servants are so little help in an emergency of this kind. My husband has gone off in the car to summon the fire-brigade.'

'Haven't you telephoned to them?' asked the Major.

'The telephone unfortunately is in the East wing,' said the hostess, 'so is the telephone book. Both are being devoured by the flames at this moment. It makes one feel dreadfully isolated. Now if the fire had only broken out in the West wing instead, we could have used the telephone and had the fire engines here by now.'

'On the other hand,' objected Lucien, 'Canon Clore and Major Bovertry and myself would probably have met with the fate that has overtaken the telephone book. I think I prefer the present arrangement.'

'The butler and most of the other servants are in the dining-room, trying to save the Raeburns and the alleged Vandyke,' continued Mrs. Gramplain, 'and in that little room on the first landing, cut off from us by the cruel flames, is my poor darling Eva. Eva of the golden hair. Will none of you save her?'

'Who is Eva of the golden hair?' asked Lucien.

'My daughter,' said Mrs. Gramplain.

'I didn't know you had a daughter,' said Lucien, 'and really I don't think I can risk my life to save someone I've never met or even heard about. You see, my life is not only wonderful and beautiful to myself, but if my life goes, nothing else really matters—to me. I don't suppose you can realise that, to me, the whole world as it exists today, the Ulster problem, the Albanian tangle, the Kikuyu controversy, the wide field of social reform and Antarctic exploration, the realms of finance, and research and international armaments, all this varied and crowded and complex world, all comes to a complete and absolute end, the moment my life is finished. Eva might be snatched from the flames and live to be the grandmother of brilliant and charming men and women, but as far as I should be concerned she and they would no more exist than a vanished puff of cigarette smoke or a dissolved soda-water bubble. And if, in losing my life, I am to lose her life and theirs, as far as I personally am concerned with them, why on earth should I, personally, risk my life to save her's and theirs?'

'Major Bovertry,' exclaimed Mrs. Gramplain, 'you are not clever, but you are a man with honest human feelings. I have only known you for a few hours, but I am sure you are the man I take you for. You will not let my Eva perish.'

'Lady,' said the Major stumbingly, 'I would gladly give my life to rescue your Eva, or anybody's Eva for the matter of that, but my life is not mine to give. I am engaged to the sweetest little woman in the world. I am everything to her. What would my poor little Mildred say if they brought her news that I had cast away my life in an endeavour, perhaps fruitless, to save some unknown girl in a burning country house?'

'You are like all the rest of them,' said Mrs. Gramplain bitterly; 'I thought that you, at least, were stupid. It shows how rash it is to judge a man by his bridge play. It has been like this all my life,' she continued in dull level tones; 'I was married, when little more than a child, to my husband, and there has never been any real bond of affection between us. We have been polite and considerate

to each other—nothing more. I sometimes think that if we had had a child things might have been different.'

'But—your daughter Eva?' queried the Canon, and the two other men echoed his question.

'I have never had a daughter,' said the woman quietly, yet amid the roar and crackle of the flames her voice carried, so that not a syllable was lost. 'Eva is the outcome of my imagination. I so much wanted a little girl and at last I came to believe that she really existed. She grew up, year by year, in my mind, and when she was eighteen I painted her portrait, a beautiful young girl with masses of golden hair. Since that moment the portrait has been Eva. I have altered it a little with the changing years—she is twenty-one now—and I have re-painted her dress with every incoming fashion. On her last birthday I painted her a pair of beautiful diamond earrings. Every day I have sat with her for an hour or so, telling her my thoughts, or reading to her. And now she is there, alone with the flames and the smoke, unable to stir, waiting for the deliverance that does not come.'

'It is beautiful,' said Lucien, 'it is the most beautiful thing I ever heard.'

'Where are you going?' asked his hostess, as the young man moved towards the blazing staircase of the East wing.

'I am going to try to save her,' he answered; 'as she has never existed, my death cannot compromise her future existence. I shall go into nothingness, and she, as far as I am concerned, will go into nothingness too, but then she has never been anything else.'

'But your life, your beautiful life?'

'Death in this case is more beautiful.'

The Major started forward.

'I am going too,' he said simply.

'To save Eva?' cried the woman.

'Yes,' he said; 'my little Mildred will not grudge me to a woman who has never existed.'

'How well he reads our sex,' murmured Mrs. Gramplain, 'and yet how badly he plays bridge.'

The two men went side by side up the blazing staircase, the slender young figure in the well-fitting dinner-jacket and the thick-set military man in striped pyjamas of an obvious Swan and Edgar pattern. Down in the hall below them stood the woman in her pale wrapper and the Canon in his wonderful-hued Albanian-work dressing-gown, looking like the arch-priests of some strange religion presiding at a human sacrifice.

As the rescue-party disappeared into the roaring cavern of smoke and flames the butler came into the hall, bearing with him one of the Raeburns.

'I think I hear the clanging of the fire-engines, ma'am,' he announced.

Mrs. Gramplain continued staring at the spot where the two men had disappeared.

'How stupid of me,' she said presently to the Canon, 'I've just remembered I sent Eva to Exeter to be cleaned. Those two men have lost their lives for nothing.'

'They have certainly lost their lives,' said the Canon.

'The irony of it all,' said Mrs. Gramplain, 'the tragic irony of it all.'

'The real irony of the affair lies in the fact that it will be instrumental in working a social revolution of the utmost magnitude,' said the Canon; 'when it becomes known through the length and breadth of the land that an army officer and a young ornament of the social world have lost their lives in a country-house fire, started by suffragette incendiarism, the conscience of the country will be aroused, and people will cry out that the price is too heavy to pay. The Militants will be in worse odour than ever, but, like the Importunate Widow, they will get their way. Over the charred bodies of Major Bovenry and Lucien Wattleskeat the banners of progress and enfranchisement will be carried forward to victory, and the mothers of the nation will henceforth take their part in electing the Mother of Parliaments. England will range herself with Finland and other enlightened countries which have already admitted women to the labours, honours and responsibilities of the polling-booth. In the early hours of this February morning a candle has been lighted—'

'The fire was caused by an over-heated flue, and not by Suffragettes, sir,' interposed the butler.

At that moment a scurry of hoofs and a clanging of bells, together with the hoot of a motor-horn, was heard above the roaring of the flames.

'The fire-brigade!' exclaimed the Canon.

'The fire-brigade and my husband,' said Mrs. Gramplain in her dull level voice; 'it will all begin over again now, the old life, the old unsatisfying weariness, the old monotony; nothing will be changed.'

'Except the East wing,' said the Canon gently.

Maugham and Two Myths

BY DAVID PAUL

If curiosity is one of the chief requisites of the novelist, then Mr. Somerset Maugham has it in abundance ; indeed, even a superficial glance at his many works will show that he has enough, and more than enough, of this quality to suffice for two or three novelists. The trouble is, as a closer examination will soon show, that the degree of intuition or understanding which accompanies it never pierces beyond a certain level. Like another cosmopolitan, Paul Morand, the range in width of his observation is more or less unconfined : but as to depth, it would be misleading to speak of it in terms of range, because it is slight and remains steadfastly within the same limit. His uniformity in this respect is well mirrored by the even and unhesitating banality of his style. It is a style not altogether without distinction, but it is distinguished in a curious way—by the steadfast exclusion of anything but the most limited research in the choice of words. Alain-Fournier has defined the task of the stylist as ‘ la recherche longue des mots qui redonnent l'impression première et complète,’ and the definition may here be negatively applied. For the impression that Mr. Maugham's words give is, on the contrary, secondary and incomplete. This happens to be all to his advantage as far as his principal gift is concerned, for he is, above everything else, a master of narrative—one of the greatest in the language. Words that give the primary and complete impression would be of dubious advantage to the story-teller, as they administer the kind of shock that holds up the narrative, instead of urging the reader on. Maugham has all the traditional tricks of the story-teller, as well as some peculiar to himself—the apparent indirectness of movement which reveals itself retrospectively as the covering of the shortest distance between the necessary points, the judiciously placed parentheses to provide breathing-spells, the seemingly complex weaving backwards and forwards, which makes for a much speedier narrative than would a direct approach. He even carries considerateness of the reader to the extreme of informing him in advance which passages may be safely skipped as far as the general purpose of the story is concerned. This brings us to a complication. For though he is above all else a narrator, Maugham does not see himself simply as that and nothing more. In spite of his constant concern to beguile the reader, his purpose does not end there. He has views to express and, in his most recent novel, a message to convey.

Indeed it is in this book, *The Razor's Edge*, that he warns us that the chapter which may most conveniently be skipped as far as story

is concerned also contains the central purpose of the book, without which it would not have been written. This is the chapter which gives us the principal and final evolutions of Larry in his search for a belief and a way of life. Our interest in Larry's possible attainments in this respect have already been reinforced (characteristically enough) by admiration for the tricks he can do. We have seen him charm away violent and incurable headaches with the aid of suggestion and a Greek coin; and if he does not perform the Indian rope-trick (which would bore us, anyway, by overtaxing our belief) he does perform engaging tricks of vicarious levitation on his friends and finally, to clinch credulity, on the author himself. With this prowess in mind, the author must have been convinced that we would 'read on' in spite of the warning. A man who can make you lift your hands above your head, without your volition, must necessarily have an interesting philosophy of life.

It is in connection with his views, and with the curiosity that has already been remarked, that one may draw attention to a singular talent which Maugham has displayed on more than one occasion though never more signally than in his latest novel. I can only describe it as a sensitivity to current mythology as it is in process of formation, an intuitive feeling for the shifts and fashions in contemporary impulse and aspiration as they take place. It is this which makes him, in spite of the consciousness of age which he does not conceal, and the worn Edwardian quality of his style, so surprisingly up to date. One cannot but admire the astuteness of the choice of theme as well as the treatment of it. He revealed the same flair, along with the same limitations, in a much earlier novel, one of his best, and best known—*The Moon and Sixpence*. In this he drew for material on the life, or such facts as were then known of the life of Gauguin, a life whose legendary quality was rapidly becoming a symbol. Gauguin, along with Rimbaud, is the chief incarnation of the modern myth of the artist. (Why, by the way, has not Maugham written a novel about Rimbaud? Such a novel would certainly make beguiling reading.) Now though everyone is not interested in modern painting or modern poetry, everyone is perforce interested in a modern myth, because it is something to which everyone has contributed. All must come within its magnetic field. In the territory of the myth, whether that of *Œdipus* or *Arthur*, *Landru* or *Bluebeard*, *T. E. Lawrence* or *Gauguin*, we are on terms of equality and community. We share to a certain degree the qualities of audience and hero, hunter and hunted, admirer and admired. I have compared the myth to a magnetic field because its importance and attraction lie in the fact that it maps and unifies the forces of the emotions. The genesis and development of myths has not been systematically defined, but it can be said that they arise from and satisfy some contemporary human need—they resolve

an emotional puzzle. Though the works of art they generate remain valid in the human imagination, the myths themselves grow old and decline. The *Œdipus* myth, three thousand years old, has at length met its end in the rational explanation put forward by Freud. The emotional and artistic resolution offered by the myth itself is no longer required.

The artist-outcast is a figure of the romantic myths which arose after the advent of industrialism, and because of it. Industrialisation imposes a routine, not based on tradition or any system of beliefs, but simply on the motives of the machine—the saving of time, the non-creative multiplication of production, speed, money. The process of production becomes so sectionalised that all creative sense is lost. For the more fortunate, standards of comfort were created which tended to dull or extinguish the sense of any other standards. Direct contact with the feelings, and the expression of them, became dangerous; and art consequently became something of an outlaw. Even where it tried to conform it had no secure place in the new order, and steadily lost importance. In the symbolic figure of the artist, modern man realises the double satisfaction of escaping from conditions which (whether unconsciously or not) he finds intolerable, and at the same time of condemning that escape because it defies the laws of industrial society. In the Gauguin story as recreated by Maugham, the symbolism is often heightened: for example the escape is double, both into the world of art, the 'unconventional' artist's life, and into the South Seas. (Myth has its own geography, and for most of us it is still more significant than the science. Lawrence evokes Arabia as Arthur Camelot.) Having escaped from his life of social comfort and respectability, the hero begins to behave with all the ruthlessness that psycho-analysts attribute to the liberated id. He is morally guilty of rape and murder. He shows no scruple and no consideration for others, either in attaining his ends or in satisfying his whims. Then the social conscience is satisfied by his horrible death from leprosy—and last and most telling touch of all, the works of art which crowned his achievement and which, judging from the description would have shocked any town council, are destroyed. The town councillor who reads may at once gloat and satisfy the desire for condemnation and destruction.

The Moon and Sixpence was written a considerable time ago, and since then many features of the myth have become commonplace, and do not elicit the full response they once did. The myth has begun to lose some of its actuality with the gradual re-absorption of the artist into daily life in the function of film scenarist or poster designer, or the conventional recognition of new industrial types of artist—the film director or the photographer. We will better appreciate Maugham's aptitude for seizing the outlines of current mythology as it forms and

using them for his purposes from a consideration of his most recent work, *The Razor's Edge*, published in this country in 1944. It embodies the newest and most modish of myths, that of the Yogi, whose emergence was first given critical consideration in an essay, now famous, by Arthur Koestler. Larry, the happy and beautiful hero of the novel, is the new Parsifal. He is pure ideal, and does not, like the artist hero, embody the scapegoat as well. He cannot realise our dreams for us by escaping to the South Seas. The South Seas are now better known as a zone of the Pacific, and have other associations. The weight of mechanised civilisation has now become so heavy and widespread that escape in place is no longer possible. He can only escape by a process of spiritual levitation, or non-attachment. He has been to India; but his movements very adequately symbolise his spiritual condition. He travels light, and even as he travels he continues to shed personal luggage and spiritual attachments. He is not an artist—that would be another form of attachment—although he writes a book. Unlike the artist again, he is not a seducer. If he is not a virgin, like Parsifal, he is sexually, as otherwise, non-attached. He begins by accepting sex whenever it is forced upon him by importunate women, but when we last see him, before he withdraws into the cauldron which is America, he has abjured sex altogether, as a clog on the spiritual faculties.

A pilot at seventeen in the first World War, he has been precociously passed through the fiery ordeal of modern civilisation and has realised its worst implications. At the same time, aloft in a 'plane, he experiences a physical foretaste of that pure serene non-attachment which he is later to achieve in spiritual terms. The sensation is described in words that Hollywood will have no difficulty in understanding:

'In the air, 'way up, I felt that I was part of something very great and very beautiful. I didn't know what it was all about, I only knew that I wasn't alone any more, by myself as I was, two thousand feet up, but that I belonged. I can't help it if it sounds silly. When I was flying above the clouds and they were like an enormous flock of sheep below me, I felt that I was at home with infinitude.'

At home with infinitude. The words have a curiously cosy sound to modern ears, now that the finite has taken on so many unbearable forms, and in its smallest calculable form seems to offer only incalculable threat.

After his brief but adequate experience as a war hero, Larry returns to his home in Illinois, and then embarks on his years of wandering and study. He is no penniless artist, living on debts. He loafs engagingly, on three thousand a year. Later he sheds his income, but not until he has acquired wisdom. Unlike the artist again, he is 'keen on mechanics,' and as a rest from his studies he works in a coal-

mine, where he proves an unqualified asset. So far from being given to bouts of temperament, he is a model of serenity. He is unassuming and frank, and mysterious without being secretive, except as to his address.—For the new hero has no home. He comes to grips with established religion in the person of a Benedictine monk. But 'I couldn't believe. I wanted to believe, but I couldn't believe in a God who wasn't any better than the ordinary decent man.' Hearing the monks praying for their daily bread, 'it seemed to me that if an omnipotent creator was not prepared to provide his creatures with the necessities of existence, material and spiritual, he'd have done better not to create them.' He is bored with the Christian preoccupation with sin, which is due for the most part to heredity, which cannot be helped, or to environment, which cannot be chosen. His farewell to the monk is significant.

"I'm afraid I've been a disappointment to you, Father," I said.

"No," he answered. "You are a deeply religious man who doesn't believe in God. God will seek you out. You'll come back. Whether here or elsewhere only God can tell."

Almost at once he goes to India. Here he finds what he wants. We are not very clearly informed as to what it is, unless it is simply a state of total detachment, which is symbolised by his giving up his three thousand a year—except for a small sum to keep him for six months at a coast resort in France, before he finally returns to his homeland. It is vaguely indicated that he has a mission in returning to America, presumably to leaven the unspiritual lump by communicating the forms of trance. For he has a trance, just before leaving India, which is described in the usual terms.

'I had a strange sensation, a tingling that arose in my feet and travelled up to my head, and I felt as though I were suddenly released from my body, and as pure spirit partook of a loveliness I had never conceived. I had a sense that a knowledge more than human possessed me, so that everything that had been confused was clear, and everything that had perplexed me was explained. No words can tell the ecstasy of my bliss.'

It must be mentioned that an examination of the central idea of this novel gives no indication of its total qualities. There is much in it besides, and it is all most accomplished and entertaining. Rarely have plot and character been so judiciously geared together, so that the development of the one seems noiselessly to propel the other. The principal function of Larry in the scheme of the book is to express and enforce the author's sense of disillusionment with the world that ended in 1940. Perhaps the sense of disillusionment arose *because* that world ended, because it was not durable enough to survive, or resourceful enough to escape. Even in Mr. Maugham's world there is now no longer a place of escape. He can only offer us escape into another

dimension, inwards into trance—but trance, he hastens to assure us, 'of the same order as the mystics have had all over the world through all the centuries: Brahmins in India, Sufis in Persia, Catholics in Spain, Protestants in New England.' Its cosmopolitan origins are presumably the final and most compelling reason for its recommendation.

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A Preface

BY ELIZABETH BOWEN

[Two of the stories in Miss Elizabeth Bowen's recent collection, 'The Demon Lover,' made their first appearance in the pages of the CORNHILL. This essay, originally composed as a foreword to the American edition, gives an account of the circumstances in which they were written, and of the effect of the war-years on the imagination of a creative artist.]

The stories in the collection entitled *The Demon Lover* were written in war-time London—between the spring of 1941 and the late autumn of 1944. They were written for the magazines or papers in which they originally appeared. During these last years, I did not always write a story when I was asked for one; but I did not write any story that I was not asked for. For at the same time I have been writing a novel; and sometimes I did not want to imperil its continuity. Does this suggest that these *Demon Lover* stories have been in any way forced or unwilling work? If so, that is quite untrue. Actually, the stimulus of being asked for a story, and the compulsion created by having promised to write one were both good—I mean, they acted as releases. Each time I sat down to write a story I opened a door; and the pressure against the other side of that door must have been very great, for things—ideas, images, emotions—came through with force and rapidity, sometimes violence. I do not say that these stories wrote themselves—æsthetically or intellectually speaking, I found the writing of some of them very difficult—but I was never in a moment's doubt as to *what* I was to write. The stories had their own momentum, which I had to control. The acts in them had an authority which I could not question. Odd enough in their way—and now some seem very odd—they were flying particles of something enormous and inchoate that had been going on. They were sparks from experience—an experience not necessarily my own.

During the war I lived, both as a civilian and as a writer, with every pore open; I lived so many lives, and, still more, lived among the packed repercussions of so many thousands of other lives, all under stress, that I see now it would have been impossible to have been writing only one book. I want my novel, which deals with this same time, to be enormously comprehensive. But a novel must have form; and, for the form's sake, one is always having to make relentless exclusions. Had it not been for my from-time-to-time promises to write stories, much that had been pressing against the door might have remained pressing against it in vain. I do not feel I 'invented' any-

thing I wrote. It seems to me that during the war the overcharged subconsciousnesses of everybody overflowed and merged. It is because the general subconsciousness saturates these stories that they have an authority nothing to do with me.

These are all war-time, none of them *war*, stories. There are no accounts of war action even as I knew it—for instance, air raids. Only one character—in 'Mysterious Kôr'—is a soldier; and he only appears as a homeless wanderer round a city. These are, more, studies of climate, war-climate, and of the strange growths it raised. I see war (or should I say feel war?) more as a territory than as a page of history: of its impersonal active historic side I have, I find, not written. Arguably, writers are always slightly abnormal people: certainly, in so-called 'normal' times my sense of the abnormal has been very acute. In war, this feeling of slight differentiation was suspended: I felt one with, and just like, everyone else. Sometimes I hardly knew where I stopped and somebody else began. The violent destruction of solid things, the explosion of the illusion that prestige, power and permanence attach to bulk and weight, left all of us, equally, heady and disembodied. Walls went down; and we felt, if not knew, each other. We all lived in a state of lucid abnormality.

Till the proofs came, I had not re-read my stories since they were, singly, written. When I read them straight through as a collection, I was most struck by what they have in common. This integrates them and gives them a cumulative and collective meaning that no one, taken singly, has by itself. *The Demon Lover* is an organic whole: not merely a collection, but somehow—for better or worse—a book. Also, the order in which the stories stand—an order come at, I may say, casually—seems itself to have a meaning, or to add a meaning, I did not foresee. We begin with a hostess who has not learned how with grace to open her own front door; we end with a pair of lovers with no place in which to sleep in each other's arms. In the first story, a well-to-do house in a polite square gives the impression of having been organically dislocated by shock; in the last, a pure abstract empty timeless city rises out of a little girl's troubled mind. Through the stories—in the order in which they are here placed—I find a rising tide of hallucination. The stories are not placed in the time-order in which they were first written—though, by chance, 'In the Square,' placed first here, is the first in the book I wrote, in a hot, raid-less patch of 1941 summer, just after Germany had invaded Russia.

The hallucinations in the stories are not a peril; nor are the stories studies of mental peril. The hallucinations are an unconscious, instinctive, saving resort on the part of the characters: life, mechanised by the controls of war-time, and emotionally torn and impoverished by changes, had to complete itself in *some* way. It is a fact that in Britain,

and especially in London, in war-time many people had strange deep intense dreams. 'Whatever else I forget about the war,' a friend said to me, 'I hope I may never forget my own dreams, or some of the other dreams I have been told. We have never dreamed like this before; and I suppose we shall never dream like this again.' Dreams by night, and the fantasies—these often childishly innocent—with which formerly matter-of-fact people consoled themselves by day were compensations. Apart from them, I do not think that the *desiccation*, by war, of our day-to-day lives can be enough stressed. The outsize World War news was stupefying: headlines and broadcasts came down and down on us in hammerlike chops, with great impact but, oddly, little reverberation. The simple way to put it was: 'One cannot take things in.' What was happening was out of all proportion to our faculties for knowing, thinking and checking up. The circumstances under which ordinary British people lived were preposterous—so preposterous that, in a dull way, they simplified themselves. And all the time we knew that compared with those on the Continent we in Britain could not be said to suffer. Foreign faces about the London streets had personal pain and impersonal history sealed up behind the eyes. All this pressure drove egotism underground, or made it whiten like grass under a stone. And self-expression in small ways stopped—the small ways had been so very small that we had not realised how much they amounted to. Planning fun, going places, choosing and buying things, dressing yourself up, and so on. All that stopped. You used to know what you were like from the things you liked, and chose. Now there was not what you liked, and you did not choose. Any little remaining choices and pleasures shot into new proportion and new value: people paid big money for little bunches of flowers.

Literature of the Resistance has been steadily coming in from France. I wonder whether in a sense all war-time writing is not resistance writing? Personal life here, too, put up its own resistance to the annihilation that was threatening it—war. Everyone here, as is known, read more: and what was sought in books—old books, new books—was the communicative touch of personal life. To survive, not only physically but spiritually, was essential. People whose homes had been blown up went to infinite lengths to assemble bits of themselves—broken ornaments, odd shoes, torn scraps of the curtains that had hung in a room—from the wreckage. In the same way, they assembled and checked themselves from stories and poems, from their memories, from one another's talk. Outwardly, we accepted that at this time individual destiny had to count for nothing: inwardly, individual destiny became an obsession in every heart. You cannot depersonalise persons. Every writer during this time was aware of the personal cry of the individual. And he was aware of the passionate

attachment of men and women to every object or image or place or love or fragment of memory with which his or her destiny seemed to be identified, and by which the destiny seemed to be assured.

The search for indestructible landmarks in a destructible world led many down strange paths. The attachment to these when they had been found produced small worlds-within-worlds of hallucination—in most cases, saving hallucination. Writers followed the paths they saw or felt people treading, and depicted those little dear saving illusory worlds. I have done both in *The Demon Lover* stories.

You may say that these resistance-fantasies are in themselves frightening. I can only say that one counteracts fear by fear, stress by stress. In 'The Happy Autumn Fields,' one finds a woman projected from flying-bombed London, with its day-and-night eeriness, into the key emotional crisis of a Victorian girlhood. In 'Ivy Gripped the Steps,' a man in the early forties peers through the rusted fortifications and down the dusty empty perspectives of a seaside town at the Edwardian episode that has crippled his faculty for love. In 'The Inherited Clock,' a girl is led to find the key to her own neurosis inside a timepiece. The past, in all these cases, discharges its load of feeling into the anaesthetised and bewildered present. It is the 'I' that is sought—and retrieved, at the cost of no little pain. And, the ghosts—definite in 'Green Holly,' questionable (for are they subjective purely?) in 'Pink May,' 'The Cheery Soul' and 'The Demon Lover'—what part do they play? They are the certainties. The bodiless foolish wanton, the puritan other presence, the tipsy cook with her religion of English fare, the ruthless young soldier lover unheard of since 1916: hostile or not, they rally, they fill the vacuum for the uncertain 'I.'

I am sorry that my stories do not contain more 'straight' pictures of the war-time scene. Such pictures could have been interesting: they *are* interesting in much of the brilliant reportage that exists. I know that, in these stories, the backgrounds, and sometimes the circumstances, are only present by inference. Allow for the intensely subjective mood into which most of the characters have been cast. Remember that these impulsive movements of fantasy are by-products of the non-impulsive major routine of war. These are between-time stories—mostly reactions from, or intermissions between, major events. They show a levelled-down time, when a bomb on your house was as inexpedient but not more abnormal than a cold in your head. There was an element of chanciness and savageness about everything—even, the arrival at a country house for Christmas. The claustrophobia of not being able to move about freely and without having to give account of yourself—not, for instance, being able to visit a popular seaside resort, within 70 miles of London, between 1940 and 1944—appears in many: notably, in 'Ivy Gripped the Steps.' The ghostly

social pattern of London life—or, say, the conventional pattern one does not easily break, and is loth to break because it is 'I'—saving—appears in the vacant politeness of 'In the Square,' and in the inebriate night-club conversation, and in 'Careless Talk.' These are ways in which some of us did go on—after all, we had to go on *some* way. And the worthless little speaker in 'Pink May' found the war made a moratorium for her married conscience. Yes, only a few were heroic purely: and see how I have not drawn the heroic ones! But everyone was pathetic—more than they knew. Owing, though, to the thunder of those inordinate years, we were shaken out of the grip of our own pathos.

In war-time, even in Britain, much has been germinating. *What*, I do not know—who does, yet, know?—but I felt the germination; and feel it, here and there, in these stories now that I read them through. These are received impressions of happening things; impressions that stored themselves up and acquired force without being analysed or considered. These, as war-time stories, are at least contemporary—twenty, forty, sixty years hence they may be found interesting as documents, even if they are found negligible as art. This discontinuous writing, nominally 'inventive,' is the only diary I have kept. Transformed into images in the stories, there *may* be important psychological facts: if so, I did not realise their importance. Walking in the darkness of the nights of six years (darkness which transformed a capital city into a network of inscrutable canyons) one developed new bare alert senses, with their own savage warnings and notations. And by day one was always making one's own new maps of a landscape always convulsed by some new change. Through it all, one probably picked up more than can be answered for. I cannot answer for much that is in these stories, except to say that I know they are all true—true to the general life that was in me at the time. Taken singly, they are disjected snapshots—snapshots taken from close up, too close up, in the middle of the *mêlée* of a battle. You cannot *render*, you can only embrace—if it means embracing to suffocation-point—something vast that is happening right on top of you. Painters have painted, and photographers who were artists have photographed, the tottering lace-like architecture of ruins, dark mass-movements of people, and the untimely brilliance of flaming skies. I cannot paint or photograph like this—I have isolated, I have made for the particular, spotlighting faces or cutting out gestures that are not even the faces or gestures of great sufferers. This is how I am, how I feel, whether in war or peace-time; and only as I am and feel can I write. As I said at the start, though I criticise these stories now, afterwards, intellectually, I cannot criticise their content. They are the particular. But through the particular, in war-time, I felt the high-voltage current of the general pass.

Who Wrote the First 'Vers Libre'?

BY P. MANSELL JONES

'To talk of the *vers libre*,' said Paul Valéry, 'was to start a war which like many another war could not be stopped.' On the protracted debate of the 'origins' of the *vers libre*, M. Henri Mondor, in his *Vie de Mallarmé* (copies of which have begun to circulate in this country) throws the light of confirmation rather than of discovery. Apart from reservations about the contribution of Rimbaud, M. Mondor's conclusions are not much dissimilar from those reached by Edouard Dujardin in his valuable opusculé, incorporating three lectures delivered at the Sorbonne in 1920 and published as *Les Premiers Poètes du Vers Libre* (Mercure de France). It was Dujardin who, having founded the *Revue Wagnérienne*, took Mallarmé and Huysmans to their first audition of Wagner at the Concerts Colonne on Good Friday, 1886, thus helping to identify symbolism with music.

Another early and energetic disciple of Mallarmé, the combative Gustave Kahn, came to believe that 'Symbolism' was synonymous with the *vers libre* almost to the exclusion of everything else; and that the first *vers libre* was his own invention. The writer of this note had an occasion to talk with Kahn in the winter before the Great War, when Paris, at least the Paris of the poets, still vibrated with tremors of the Symbolist eruption. Kahn was dogmatic as ever, but his stock of vitriol seemed exhausted. His remarks were precise and helpful, devoid of those appropriations and aspersions which in earlier years had embarrassed many of his friends, turning some of them, like the learned but malicious Van Bever, into scornful critics not only of his pretensions but even of his poems. That Kahn overstressed his role seems clear enough now. But Mallarmé paid repeated compliments to his 'innovation,' even if his approbation sometimes appears stressed to the point of irony. As a promoter and as a theorist, by experiment if not by achievement, Kahn made significant contributions towards the deliverance of French rhythm and the definition of the new form. Kahn, M. Mondor reminds us, was the author of the first *volume* of free verse. But the reservation must be made that by no means all the poems collected in *Les Palais nomades* of 1887 were written in *vers libres*. It is best, I think, to accept this book as a record—I won't say a living record, because so much of it is dead, but as a graph indicating the emergence of the form in question. Incorporated with a couple of later books in the *Premières Poésies* of

1897, it was prefaced by an important essay on the origination and theory of the *vers libre*. Theory and origination, of course, à la Kahn, this essay is none the less the first considerable effort to explain the nature and purpose of the experiment.

But we anticipate. The whole discussion was closely related to the contents of a small review called *La Vogue*, taken over by Kahn soon after its start in April 1886. More meagre in appearance than the humblest of our wartime literary journals, with shabby green covers, jaundiced paper and poor print, it shared the brief existence of most of the *petites revues*. A few copies were once shown me in secret as if they were priceless incunabula. And indeed if there is a full set extant they would be as well worth reprinting as were those early romantic organs, *Le Globe* and *La Muse Française*. In *La Vogue* appeared the first acknowledged *vers libres*. Already the plot had thickened. Kahn's claims had stimulated protestations from a Polish poetess, Mme Marie Kryszewska, 'la Sainte Jean Baptiste du vers libre,' and invidiously on her behalf from people who were alarmed at the threatened deliquescence of French prosody. Even a Peruvian exile, Della Rocca de Vergalo, had a claim to stake. A copy of his experimentations, presented to Mallarmé, had called forth probably the first of the master's observations on the subject. And there were other claimants. The most revolutionary spirit in French poetry of that time or since lay low and quiet like a time-bomb in a basket of orchids. Rimbaud's *Illuminations*, which had been circulating in manuscript, were recovered by Verlaine and reproduced in a few issues of *La Vogue*, where they passed unnoticed. Even when the sequence reappeared as a pamphlet, its publisher waited a fortnight for a copy to be bought; it went to Paul Bourget for a song. Whatever may be said of the form of most of them, two of these pieces were distinguished by Dujardin as the very first poems in French to have been written in free verse.

Kahn admitted, when I saw him, that the movement towards the liberation of French verse was latent in the development of poetic prose and the prose-poem as practised especially by Baudelaire, and before Baudelaire in a tradition that has subsequently been traced back to Fénelon. Kahn said nothing of Laforgue, to whom he gave a limited role in his preface. Rimbaud's name, when mentioned, was brushed aside: his work was unknown.

Vielé-Griffin, whose grand manner was, I found, very far removed from the bourgeois or bohemian *bonhomie* of most of his companions at arms, preferred to stress the enfranchisement traditional verse had received from the blows of that 'forgeron,' Hugo, or at the 'musician' touch of Verlaine. Considered the most competent *verslibriste* of his day (his reputation, like that of his friend, Henri de Régnier, has shrunk in the meantime), Vielé-Griffin had declared the verse 'free'

in a prefatory note to his poems, *Joies* (1890). These also received their meed of praise from Mallarmé, seasoned with delicate innuendoes about foreigners living at Paris who feel encouraged to make changes because they think their native poetry gains by escaping the 'intransigent rules' of French prosody. Mallarmé would not allow that any innovation could dispose of the '*vers officiel*,' which would always be required for 'full organ' effects. His own field of formal experimentation was the prose-poem and he dived and subtilised until he had produced, in the famous but still fearfully obscure 'score' of *Jamais un coup de dés* . . . , the most 'advanced' piece of writing ever produced by listening to an orchestra. In it, if only you are percipient enough, you hear a symphony transposed to the format of the printed page, and, for Valéry at least, constellations were to be seen rising and setting as one listened.

What was the upshot of these experiments and perturbations? It certainly looked at the time as if a drastic break had been made with the tradition. The *vers libre* is ideally something new, though the term itself is old. Molière, La Fontaine and others had rung the changes on the classical verse by combining metres in paragraphs of unequal lines; the line itself they respected, but for the most part they ignored the stanza. Kahn, and those whom Robert de Souza (the 'scientific' investigator of the new technique) differentiated as the true *verslibristes*, deliberately aimed at making a complete break with the old versification. The domination of the 'official' verse was felt by many to have lasted too long and the 'new' poets (they had all begun to write in the traditional manner) aspired to be free of it. In the challenge they offered to custom, routine and abuse, one can see a certain heroism and, as all heroes are not invariably modest, understand the ambitions of Kahn. Laforgue himself, the modest type of hero, might have put in a claim, as it is clear that, by the most generous margin, Kahn's priority could only have been a matter of months. But Laforgue had died in 1887 and his friend spoke for him in a preface published ten years later. There his rhythmical innovations were passed off as 'psychological.' They should of course have been 'musical.' Kahn was a typical Symbolist in aiming at new rhythms which should approximate to the freedom of musical rhythms. But it may be suggested that the English *vers libre*, with its appropriation of speech rhythm, comes nearer to the conception of Laforgue.

The primitive impulse, if not the sustaining urge, behind the effort was, in a sense, negative—the desire to escape from the rigorous laws of French versification as laid down mainly by the practical genius of Ronsard, reinforced and restricted by those martinets of prosody, Malherbe and Boileau. Together they had perfected one of the greatest lines in poetry—that 'noodle' of an alexandrine, as Victor

Hugo was to call it,* and which the romantic master 'dislocated' but by no means disposed of. Indeed, by liberating the caesura he gave it a new lease of life.

The positive side of the effort was the discovery of new rhythms. Technically speaking, the ideal was to abolish the count of syllables which dominated French scansion and to substitute, in Dujardin's words, 'non-syllabic' for 'syllabic' verse. The whole revolution is there in epitome; and it is specifically a French revolution, as in no other versification has the strict count of syllables been so fundamental to scansion. Kahn regarded rhythm in a similar way as, so to speak, a creation of the poet, not of the prosodist. The rules about counting the 'e' mute would naturally fall into abeyance and rhyme could be softened to assonance or ignored. Actually many *verslibristes* observed rhyme more or less strictly; and distinctions must be made between theory and practice. Experiments in *vers libre* have ranged from tinkerings with the older versification to 'liberties' resulting in forms resembling that of the *Psalms* in translation or of Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*: the *verset*, as the French call it. In this sense, insisting only on emancipation, any mode that is not comparable to one or other of the older modes is 'free,' fluid to the poet's impulse or as Mallarmé called it, '*polymorphe*.'

Such liberties, and parallel developments have operated in other countries, have invariably raised debates about the frontiers between poetry and prose. Mallarmé himself tended to efface the difference as a *formal* distinction. The objective being the discovery of personal rhythms, the experimentalists cared little if their work was assimilated to 'prose,' to anomalous forms like the *Psalms*, the Greek Choruses, or Whitman's *Leaves*, or whether they were accused of borrowing from foreign prosodies or from lineal translations of foreign poems. Their critics have contended that they did not write 'poems' so much as arrange prose rhythms typographically.

But the *verslibristes* have done more than that. They have aimed at and often achieved a new organisation. Whitman called his own line 'lawless,' and so it is in the sense that it does not conform to the catalogue of English metres. But *Leaves of Grass* have a recognisable form of their own and obey their own laws, whether 'written' or intuitive. So it was with the *verslibristes*. Even when they turned their backs on the older versification—and this they rarely did completely: in every case the change over was gradual—they set to work to invent a personal form built on the accentuations of emotional emphasis or of logical phrasing with the result that a typical paragraph of *vers libres*, whether by Kahn, Laforgue, Vielé-Griffin or Henri de Régnier, is full of recurrences or 'correspondences' which provide the rhythmical pattern or basis of formal unity. Sometimes the results can be more 'fixed' and tedious than in any stanza or refrain of the

older type, as, for instance, in those over-anthologised trifles which de Régnier called (after Ronsard !) *Odelettes* :

Si j'ai parlé
De mon amour, c'est à l'eau lente
Qui m'écoute quand je me penche
Sur elle ; si j'ai parlé
De mon amour, c'est au vent
Qui rit et chuchote entre les branches ;
Si j'ai parlé de mon amour, c'est à l'oiseau
Qui passe et chante
Avec le vent ;
Si j'ai parlé
C'est à l'écho.

Vielé-Griffin's work abounds in similar repetitions, drawn largely from imitation of the *chanson*, and powerful examples occur in Verhaeren. The device persists as a kind of schema. It reappears attenuated, interrupted yet not broken in P. J. Jouve's subjective vision, blending intimate physical imagery with tranced suggestions of landscape :

Illustres sont les moires
Tendres les rochers
Parfaits les seins (et j'ai bien cru l'aimer
Elle était toute rose)

Admirables les dépôts de Dieu dans les mémoires
Le céleste tombé dans des copulations
Les miroirs les baisers roux et les gloires.

In such and many other ways the freeing of French prosody has broadened and diversified the notion and practice of poetry, liberating it from traditional limitations and the oppression of dominant examples and pedantic rules. Prominent among new objectives has been the approach to the illimitable possibilities offered by the rhythms of prose, of the ruminating monologue and of the fluctuating emphases, the colloquial intrusions and asides of conversation. Unauthorised phases of consciousness with their variable levels and impulses have become, through the new medium, *matière de poésie*, seized and annotated instantaneously and at an earlier point of emergence than could have been possible by lisping in numbers while the numbers remained those of the metrical count. The astringent intellectualisation of recent poetry has obviously gained by the new modes, were it only in the double-crossing of sentiment with irony as in Laforgue's abrupt juxtapositions, faint prototypes, as they seem to us now, of the profound antiphonies of mood and tension in *The Waste Land* ; wherein, too, original counterparts of the Mallarméan '*grandes orgues*' peal out from the chatter of ephemeral distractions. What variations have

been imposed on the lyre-strings since Parnassians and Georgians supplied their fashion-plate clichés of good form. Rhyme, not yet discarded, has ceased to be an *entrave*; this, *bijou d'un son*, and other elements of prosody tend to be applied not automatically but with control, selection and purpose.

And yet the perils that threaten every experiment in freedom are never more conspicuously attendant than upon novelties of form. The measured spell of the masters, the authority of the models of composition are in part ignored through the distractions of eleuthermania and untutored originality. The mature poet attains freedom; the novice of today starts free from scratch. No craft of scansion to be learnt before he plunges headlong into the spontaneities of derived eccentricity and deliquescent formlessness.

Even Mr. Punch's feeble caricature has point:

I have the pen of the aunt of the gardener,
You have the key of the door of the house.

A deeper reservation must be made. Is not verslibrism, the *brisement du vers*, as Remy du Gourmont called it, the mode of a poetry of Discontinuity typifying a civilisation of disruptions and cleavages heading backward, so far as we know, for chaos? 'Il est volontiers discontinu,' says a contemporary critic of Paul Eluard, 'propre à une vision changeante, miroir taillé en facettes.' But he adds: 'The miracle is precisely that this discontinuity translated by the gaucherie of certain repetitions, the abuse of definite articles and the absence of syntactical construction, gives an impression of continuity, the effect of a block of diamond.'¹ And is there not a hint of adamant serenity about the mild irregularities of lines like these?—

Vivant dans un village calme
D'où la route part longue et dure
Pour un lieu de sang et de larmes
Nous sommes purs.

Les nuits sont chaudes et tranquilles
Et nous gardons aux amoureuses
Cette fidélité précieuse
Entre toutes: l'espoir de vivre.

For Aragon the *vers libre* is a sign of the decomposition of recent poetry, 'la poésie logorrhétique de ces dernières années'; and he reacts vigorously. 'A frightful comb with broken teeth' is the compliment he pays to the free mode in a preface where he expounds artifices of his own which would make the average verslibrist wince. So far neither *les jeunes* nor their elders seem to have paid much attention to his admonitions and advice, widely as his valiant inspira-

¹ Léon-Gabriel Gros: *Poètes Contemporains*, p. 45. *Cahiers du Sud*.

tion has been acclaimed. One of the most signal of quite recent volumes, M. Henri Michaut's *Au Pays de la Magie*, employs the prose-poem with fantastic and disturbing skill. Here is a fragment, motivated like the rest to release the reader from the claims of this shoal and bank of time :

Sur une grande route, il n'est pas rare de voir une vague,
une vague toute seule, une vague à part de l'océan.

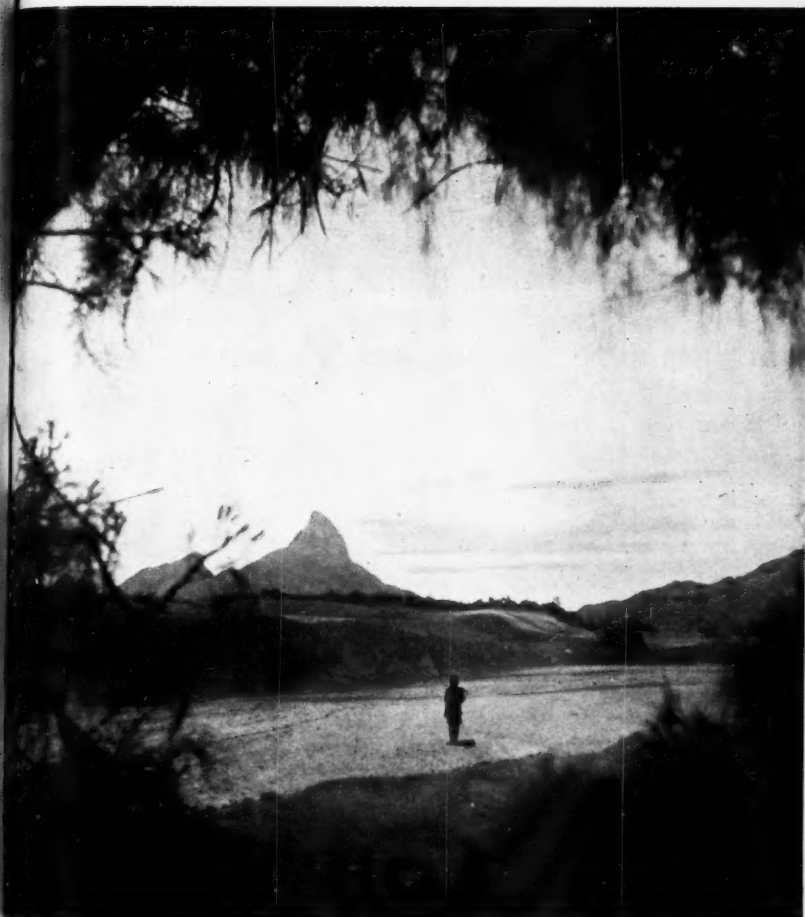
Elle n'a aucune utilité, ne constitue pas un jeu.

C'est un cas de spontanéité magique.

If it be allowed that the adaptation of the *vers libre* has offered implements for charging English lyricism with mental energy, it might even more readily be admitted that since the poetry of France has erred in the direction of rhetoric and rationalisation, the necessary complements of fantasy and the '*vie immédiate*' have had to wait for unorthodox modes and the modes have come with the moment.

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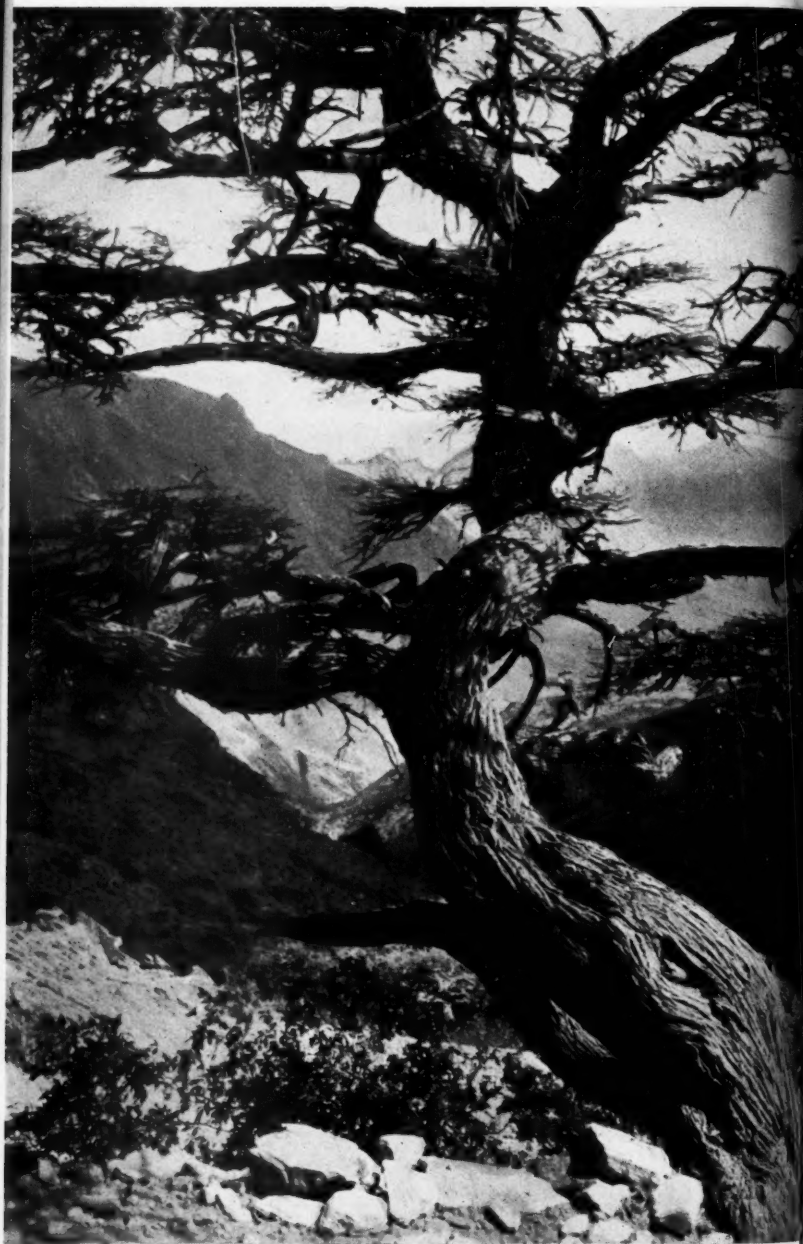
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I. A SEIL-BED OF THE DATHĪNA COUNTRY LOOKING TOWARDS THE MOUNTAIN RANGE EAST OF MAS'ĀM. TAMARISK TREES ARE CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS PART OF THE COUNTRY.

Photographs of South Arabia

*by D. van der Meulen and B. von Wissmann
from a forthcoming travel book ADEN TO THE
HADHRAMAUT by D. van der Meulen*



II. A MOUNTAIN ACACIA AT THE SUMMIT OF 'AQUABAT TALH. THE LEAVES OF THE ACACIA ARE USED FOR TANNING LEATHER.

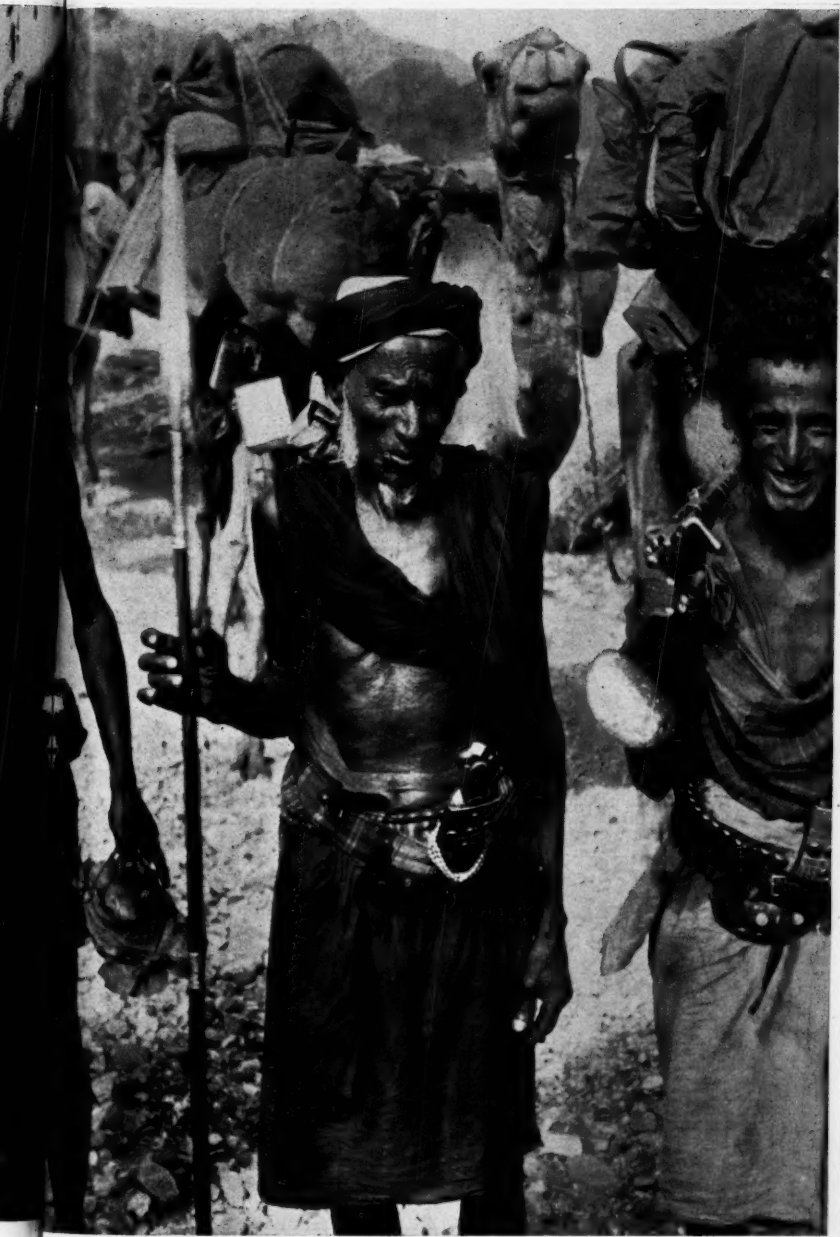
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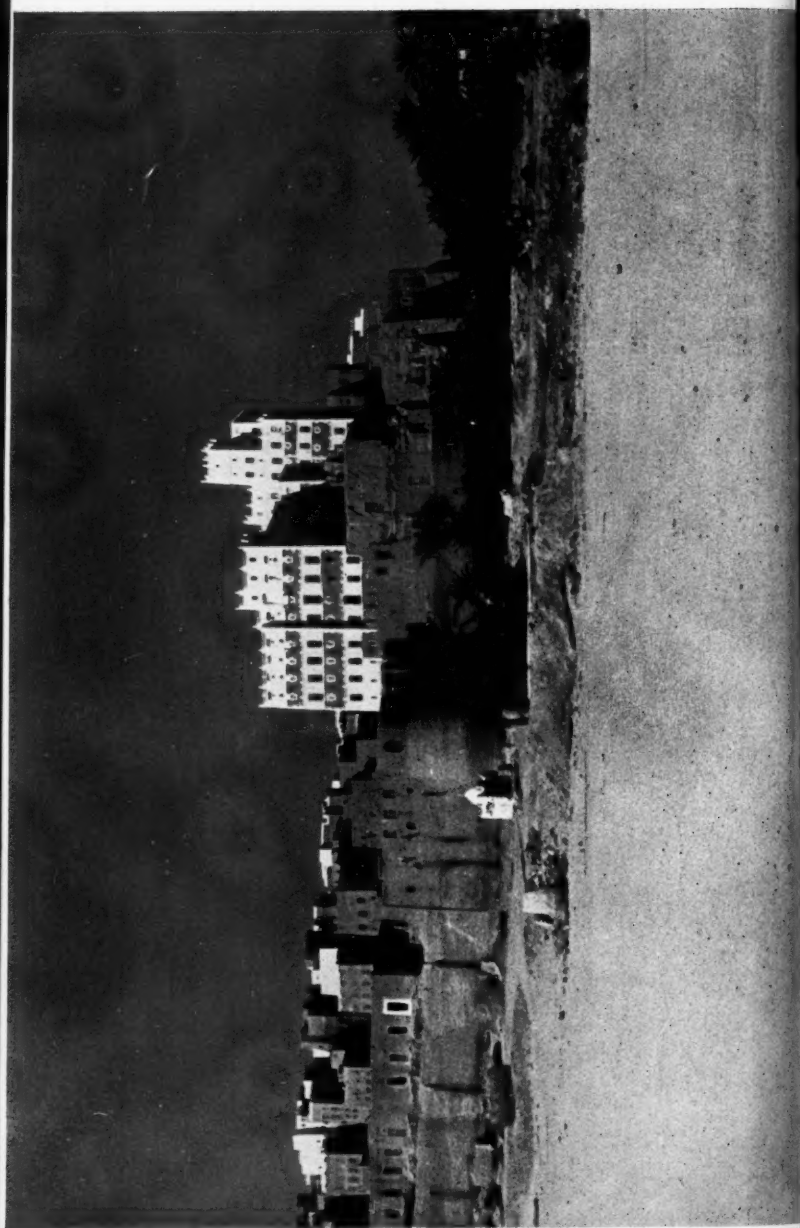
III. A VIEW FROM THE 'AQUABAT THIRÉ IN KAUR EL AUDHILLA LOOKING
TOWARDS THE WĀDI THIRÉ AND TO THE LOWLANDS OF LOWER 'AUDHILLA,
IN THE SOUTH.



IV. A STREET IN SHIBĀM.



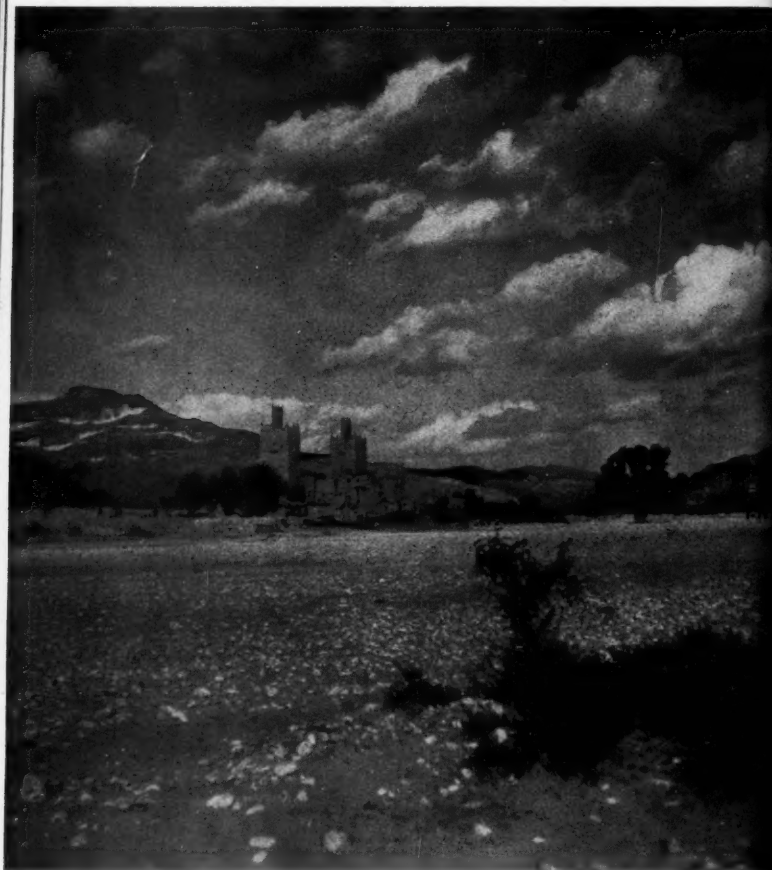
V. SHEIKH ABDALLAH HOLDING A SPEAR, THE SIGN OF HIS POSITION AS
SHEIKH OF HIS TRIBE IN WĀDI HATĪB.



VI. THE SULTAN'S PALACE AT SHIBĀM.



VII. THE SEIL-BED OF THE WĀDI JIRDĀN APPROACHING THE HAMLETS OF AMĪQ. THE *ZIZYPHUS SPINA CHRISTI* TREES SEEN IN THIS PHOTOGRAPH ARE, APART FROM A FEW DATE PALMS, THE ONLY FRUIT TREES IN THE DISTRICT.



VIII. THE UPPER HAMLET OF AMĪQ. HERE EVERY ISOLATED HOUSE IS A FORTRESS, AND EVERY VILLAGE DOMINATED BY TWO OR MORE WATCH-TOWERS.

SE 18
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